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SHAKESPEARE AND TAPESTRY

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Shakespeare and Tapestry, submitted by Dora Gertrude Cochrane in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an effort to discover to what extent Shakespeare's imagination was influenced by an awareness of tapestry and of the *tapissier*'s art. Chapters I and II are introductory chapters, clarifying some of the terms significant in tapestry, considering the art of weaving in the sixteenth century, and exploring the interaction between tapestry and poetry in order to show that Shakespeare inherited a ready-made convention. In Chapter III the use of the arras is considered briefly in *King John*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry IV*, and *Cymbeline*. Chapter IV is a detailed analysis of its influence in *Hamlet*. These two chapters show how the use of the arras develops from a simple piece of plot machinery to a significant symbol dominating the whole of the plot structure. Chapter V turns from the world of *Hamlet* and its enclosing arras to consider the narrative effect of tapestry configurations in *Troilus and Cressida* where *tapissier* and poet drew from common source materials.

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CHAPTER I

TAPESTRY--A CONVENTION AND A TECHNOLOGY

Before we can discuss the significance of Shakespeare's apparent awareness of tapestry, we must know something of the tapissier's art and its techniques. The place, then, to begin our study is not with the plays but with the technical aspects of tapestry.

Tapestry is a flat, flexible, thick-ribbed material produced on a warp-loom by weaving with a shuttle or bobbin which passes weft threads through the warp in such a way as to completely cover the warp threads. In the sixteenth century two types of looms were used for manufacturing tapestry--the high-warp or upright loom and the low-warp or horizontal loom.

Part of the awareness of a craft grows out of an understanding of the historical traditions of that craft. The high-warp loom, or rather a variation of it, can be traced through the pages of literature as far back as the days of Homer. The Odyssey tells how Penelope set up on her loom "a great web and began weaving a large and delicate piece of work."[1] Weaving by day, at night undoing the work, she was able to forestall for three years the ardent suitors who demanded her hand in marriage. Homer does not describe Penelope's loom,

but an ancient Greek vase, preserved today in the National Museum in Paris, reveals the type of loom she must have used. Eugene Müntz in his Brief History of Tapestry gives a description of this vase.

> The construction. . . resembles, with but slight variations, those now used at the Gobelins. Two uprights, connected at the top of a horizontal bar, contains the warps, held vertically by small weights attached to their extremities. Contrary to the custom at the Gobelins, the work commences at the top; the web is rolled by degrees over a cylinder; other cylinders, corresponding to our cross-bars, allow of the introduction from space to space of ivory spindles, charged with coloured threads. The finished part of the work shows us linear ornamentation, forming the border of the shroud. . . . In a low transverse band we see a winged figure, with wings also on its heels, pursuing a Pegasus; whilst griffins and other fantastic animals betray oriental influence.[2]

The high-warp looms used in the sixteenth century differed little in principle from the one described here. The process of weaving can best be explained by means of a simple diagram. (See page 3.) At the top of the loom are two movable cylinders. The warp threads are laid alternately on either side of these cylinders, the even threads on the one side, the odd threads on the other. Rings of small cords (lisses) are fastened to each thread on the front and to the common support which enables the weaver to draw the threads toward him and to lap them over the threads of the cloth behind as he passes the shuttle containing the coloured weft threads through the warp. This crossing of threads is necessary in order to be sure that the warp is completely covered. Notice the two steps in the accompanying diagram. At step I the bobbin or shuttle is passed from the right behind one-half

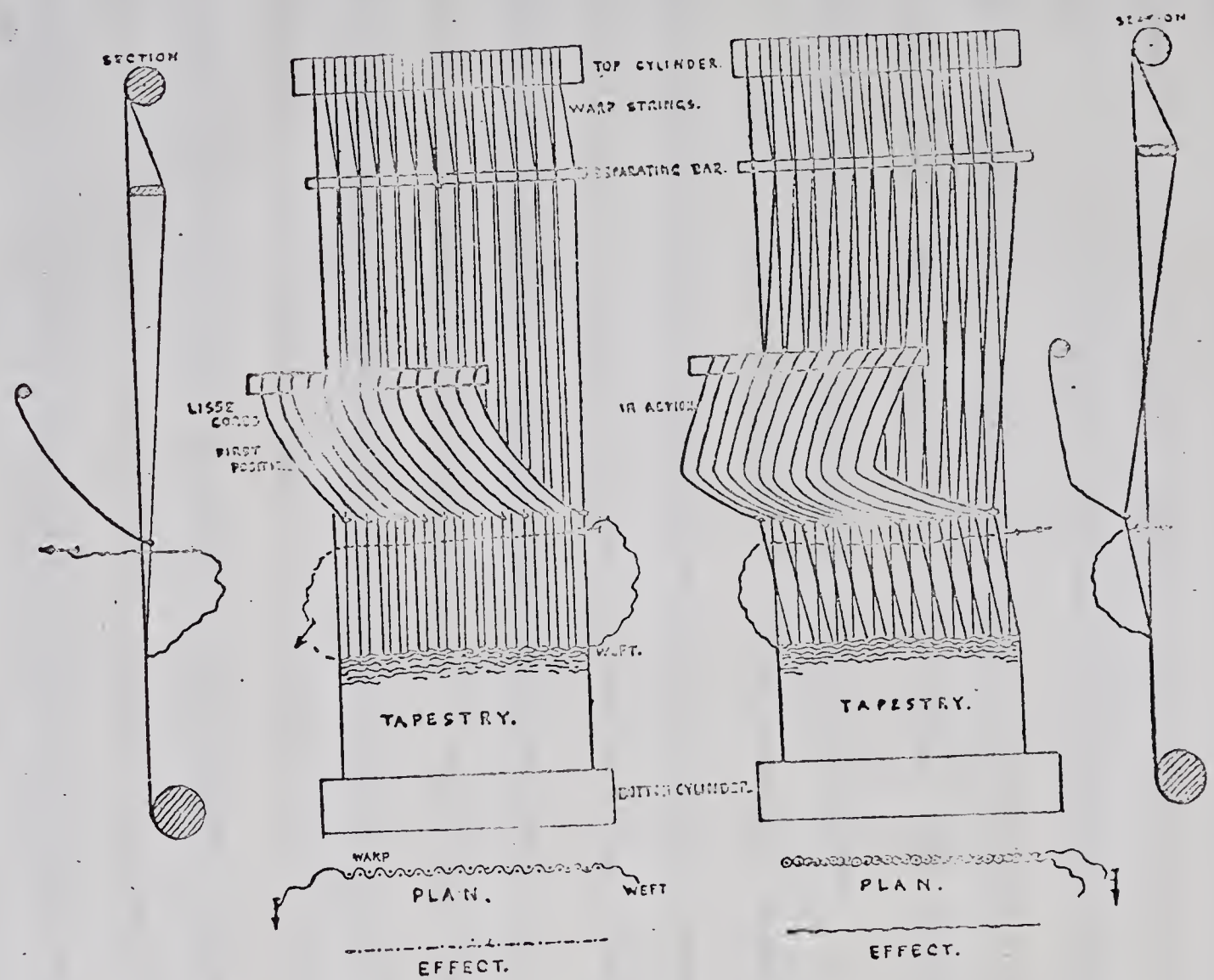


FIG. I.

FIRST PASSAGE OF SHUTTLE.

SECOND PASSAGE OF SHUTTLE.

A Simplified Tapestry Loom.

of the threads. Then the lisse is drawn toward the weaver and the bobbin is passed in the opposite direction (step II), and the warp is completely covered with coloured thread. The weaver then carefully presses these coloured threads together and strikes the woof with a heavy ivory comb to ensure the firmness of the tapestry fabric. The woofs lie side by side, or above each other, their length depending upon the pattern space required for each colour. The tag ends of thread that appear on the wrong side are called thrums.

The low-warp loom differs from the high-warp loom principally in the fact that the warp is stretched horizontally instead of vertically, and the threads are moved by means of two treadle steps instead of by the hands. Weaving can be finished much more quickly on the low-warp loom but mistakes are apt to occur more frequently. The worker on an upright loom had only to go around behind the loom to check his work, but the worker on a horizontal loom could not judge the result of his work until the tapestry was complete. About the middle of the fifteenth century Flemish workers discovered that by placing a mirror at the right angle they could check their weaving without moving to the back of the tapestry. The use of the mirror helped to speed up the work on the upright loom. The general principles of weaving are the same whether the worker is using an upright loom or a horizontal loom.

The tapestry weaver copies a prepared design known as a cartoon. In the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, these cartoons were prepared, first in small miniature sketches. Then they were copied full-scale on a large cartoon painted in colour. The high-warp weaver worked from a cartoon hanging beside him; the low-warp weaver placed his cartoon, face up, under his loom. The use of a painted cartoon would seem to suggest that the weaver had an easy job. It was not as simple as it sounds, for tapestry has a texture of its own which is quite different from the texture of a painted picture. Where the texture of a painted picture depends upon high-lights and shadows achieved by judicious placing of colour, the texture of a tapestry depends upon ribs, slits, and hatchings.

The ribs are the most obvious part of the tapestry texture. They consist of coarse warps, far apart, covered by fine wefts close together, in plain weave. These ribs form horizontal lines on the surface of the tapestry and are most prominent in the high-lights. When artfully employed, they bring the flesh of a portrait into relief. Hatchings are formed when the ribs are covered with fine threads that combine themselves into vertical spires. The strength of the hatching makes the ribs in this part of the weaving seem to disappear. This makes it seem as if the adjacent ribs were leaning against the hatchings, thus adding an appearance of strength to the finished sur-

face. The main function of the tapestry hatchings is to create middle lights which set up a contrast with the high-lights of the ribs. The position of the rib is important. It must be horizontal. If it is vertical it will distort the design. Hatchings, on the other hand, must be vertical, and the contrast between the ribs and hatchings will be both round and flat. The horizontal ribs are in round relief and the vertical hatchings are in flat colour.

In tapestry weaving, the shuttle is not passed from side to side through the entire loom. Instead, the weaver concentrates on a small area, working first in one colour, then in another as his pattern requires. When he needs another colour of a different tint, he drops the bobbin he is using and leaves it hanging by a half hitch. He then takes a fresh bobbin and begins weaving with a new colour. At the spot where the colours join will be a small slit which the skilful weaver will deliberately use as a means of accenting the texture of his design. Leland Hunter, describing a fourteenth century tapestry depicting King Arthur, writes:

> Slits model the eyes, brow, nose and mouth; give life to the hair and beard, outline and border the jewelled collar and separate the fingers . . . . It is by the intelligent use of slits [that] hands and fingers can be outlined and shadowed. . . giving the feel of bones that hold, of flesh that softens, and of veins that darken.[3]

It is seldom that slits come automatically where they are needed. The skilful tapissier must plan the slits so that they accent the texture of the tapestry. A good tapestry, lighted from the front and seen from

behind, resembles a midnight sky with a myriad of stars flickering on its surface. Seen from the front it is flecked over with tiny black spots and with short black lines that are slits. Ribs, hatchings, and slits used in a skilful combination give tapestry a texture and atmosphere that is not present in the painted picture. This is because we have in the tapestry, in addition to and superimposed upon the contrasts of the painted cartoon, the contrasts that grow out of the texture of tapestry itself--"the horizontal lines in relief, contrasting with vertical lines in colour, and with diagonal lines in intaglio."[4]

The texture of a tapestry will vary according to the materials used in making it. In the Renaissance world wool was most frequently used, but the French weavers early discovered that the use of silk and wool gave an opportunity for contrast of materials that would heighten the contrasts of slits, ribs, and hatchings. Leland Hunter tells us that:

> it may be laid down as a general principle that tapestry faces and hands and other flesh are in wool, except where touched with red silk to accentuate lips and complexion; and that ecru and dark colours are apt to be in wool, while delicate golden yellows, blues, greens, and roses are apt to be in silk.[5]

Moreover, gold and silver threads were sometimes woven into draperies and costumes to enhance the richness of appearance.

Tapestry cartoons, unless they were exclusively the property of the owner, became the property of the tapissier and might be used

over and over again. This is particularly true of practice during the sixteenth century when the tapissier had before him all the magnificent work of the Middle Ages. Sometimes the same cartoon would be used by different tapissiers with quite different effects. W. G. Thomson describes two tapestries of "The Adoration of the Eternal Father" which were obviously woven from the same cartoon. The first was a Flemish tapestry woven in 1485.

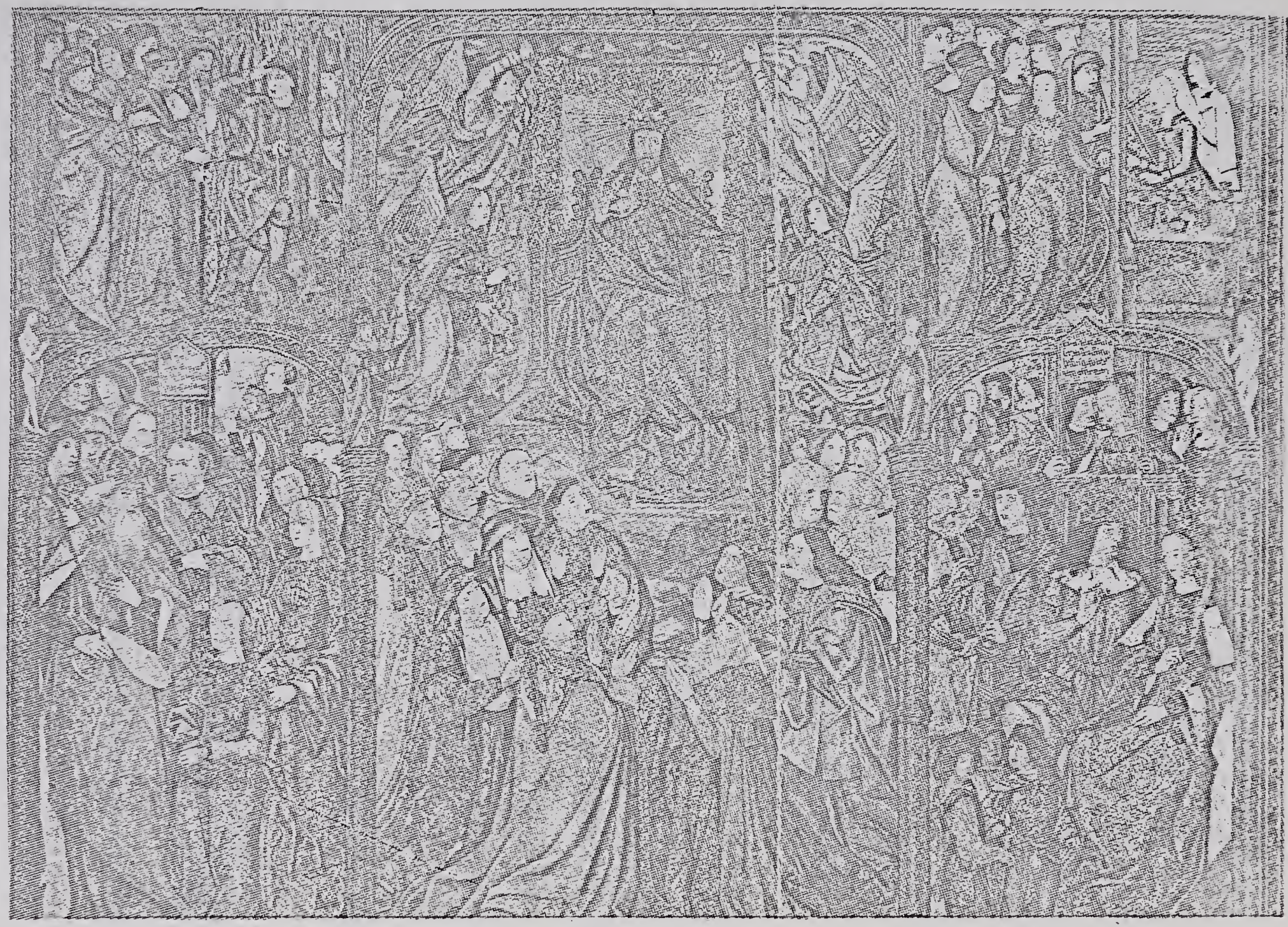
> Every inch of dress material and hanging is ornamented with the utmost elaboration. The ornamentation of the fronts of the dresses includes huge framed jewels; and whether the eye alights on the golden framework of the panel, the peasant's robe or the gorgeous cape with its "spilla" worn by the Pope, it must fail to find a plain spot. Nor can it escape anywhere from the sparkle of gold and silver thread used with lavish liberality everywhere. The vista of the sky has its silver clouds and threads of silver glitter in the whitened locks of Caesar Augustus.[6]

The thread ends, Doctor Hunter tells us, are such a thick tangle on the reverse side of this tapestry that it is almost impossible to study the weaving technique.

In the second tapestry the silver and gold ornamentation is missing, and in place of the gorgeously patterned carpet which marked the groundwork of the first tapestry, we find a flower bed. The composition of the central group is the same in both tapestries but the simplicity of the second tapestry, when seen in comparison with the first one and both of them viewed against the artist's original sketch, leads one to realize that the composition of a tapestry is at the mercy

of the master weaver.

The "painted cloth" was a substitute for tapestry. It was cheaper and therefore in far more common use, since it was used by the well-to-do merchant or farmer who could afford the long strips of painted canvas but who could not afford the more expensive tapestry. Like the tapestries these painted cloths were narrative wall-hangings.



Adoration of the Eternal Father

CHAPTER II

CONVENTIONS AND MODES OF AWARENESS

Both the poet and the tapissier seek to glorify their nation's past. The poet sings narratives, the tapissier weaves them; but between these two arts we may find what Professor McLuhan has termed "an interplay of two modes of perception."[1] In this chapter we shall explore the way in which, from earliest times, poetry and tapestry have interacted.

Tapestry, a Record of Ancient Times

Unfortunately there is little evidence today, except the literary records, to show the existence of the tapestry technology in ancient times. Ovid is the only one who describes the process of weaving, but other poets give us social pictures. Homer shows us Penelope and Andromache weaving shrouds ornamented with silhouette figures, and he gives us a picture of Helen at Troy weaving a weed:

> The work of both sides being alike, in which she did comprise
> The many labours war-like Troy and brass-arm'd Greece endur'd
> For her faire sake, by cruell Mars and his stern Friends procur'd.[2]

The earliest record which we have of known tapestry weaving dates back to Egypt and to 2900 B.C. Phyllis Ackerman tells us:

In the marble mastaba of one, Hesey, at Saqfare, there are painted on the walls a number of textiles, and one of them is unmistakable tapestry. The fabric is used for a tent, or rather a tabernacle, a pavillion made with uprights and cross-beams but with a wall filled in with woven material lashed to a wooden frame. The tapestry panels carry a pattern of concentric lozenges, yellow, light blue and red in varying succession, with black outlines between. In such a design as tapestry is normally woven, every coloured margin would be punctured with a succession of perforations, a grave weakness in a textile that was to meet the strains and wear of a tent wall. But as the painting painstakingly indicates, this has been obviated by dovetailing the lines of juxtaposition, carrying the wefts of one colour into the adjacent colour area in groups probably of about three, and vise versa, alternately, to make a serrated margin that minimizes the weakness of the weave. It is a device that shows not only complete control of the technique, but experience of its defect and experiment in overcoming it.[3]

Records such as this one verify the use of tapestry weaving for the purpose of making tents and establish its early use as a decorative fabric. Moreover, they show, in the early stages of civilization, a definite relationship between tapestry and architecture, suggesting that the use of tapestry for a wall-covering was really an architectural extension. We find evidence in the literature of the Bible that supports this assumption if, as I suspect, the curtains of the tabernacle were made of tapestry:

And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue and purple and scarlet: with cherubims of cunning work made he them.[4]

Not only the curtains but the veil and the hangings for the tabernacle door were made in similar manner. It is possible that tapestry was also used for the hangings in the banquet hall of Ahasareus.

There were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble.[5]

From the implications of these accounts we can see how tapestry, in the tent, was the wall itself; and how it became, in the hangings, an extension of the wall. In literature this functional use of tapestry is a matter of record. As such it became, itself, a part of the interplay between the art of the poet and that of the tapissier, and the poet was free to develop by metaphor and by implication all that lay within the traditional use of tapestry.

Tapestry as Decoration

Records from ancient Greece are more specific than Egyptian and Hebrew records are. Plutarch tells us that tapestry workers formed part of the army of artists under the order of Phidias the Greek architect who designed the Parthenon. Monsieur de Ronchaud, the famous French historian of tapestry, commenting on the part played by tapestry in the decoration of the Parthenon has this to say:

We should remember that the Parthenon was a painted temple. Outwardly the walls of the cells, the columns of the porticoes, and of the peristyle, the cornices, the friezes, the pediments, and their statues were all so coloured as to give the marble an appearance of life. The temple of Athene, thus decorated, and like most Greek temples, turning toward the East, resembled an immense flower expanding in the morning rays. The same style characterized the decoration of the interior. Walls and columns were all clothed in brilliant and harmonious tones, the secret of which was revealed to the artist by the Eastern Sun. In the midst of the sanctuary stood the magnificent idol of gold and ivory, the masterpiece of the genius of Phidias. Tapestries were

the natural completion of the decoration surrounding the statue, and were bound to accord with its splendour. . . . The ingenious arrangement increased the number of veils surrounding the deity, mellowed the light falling on her golden helmet and spear, and allowed it to melt at her feet into a transparent shade, suggestive of religious thought.[6]

The De Ronchaud quotation shows that tapestry as a medium of decoration can help to establish an atmosphere. In literature this motif offered endless possibilities, for the decorative function opened up the whole field of atmosphere. We can trace the use of tapestry from ancient Greece westward into Italy and thence northward into Western Europe and at each step of this journey we will find that the tapestry motif found its own place in literature.

In England

Little can be discovered about the early history of the tapestry industry in England. There are records that show that by 1331 the "tapicers" of London had received their statute. Also we discover that in 1345 Edward III ordered an inquiry into the quality of wool used by the London "tapisers." Hence we can assume that by that time an English industry had been established. But, since we also know that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries many tapestries were imported from European countries, we can conclude that the English industry had not yet reached any significant development. It is quite possible that the long, drawn-out civil war which disturbed the peace of England

at this time prevented any real expansion of the industry in England.

Not only did the Middle Ages see the start of a tapestry industry in England, but it saw too the development of a literary consciousness built up around tapestry. Chaucer paid a tribute to tapestry as an industry rather than as an art by including a "Tapycer" among his Canterbury pilgrims.

> An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,
> A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer, -
> And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
> Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.[7]

The influence which tapestry had on literature was not always as direct as this, sometimes it was a borrowed influence. When the tapissier chose famous literary episodes as his subjects, as we should expect, the movement between tapestry and poetry was reflexive. For example, Guillaume de Loris wrote his Romaunt de la Rose in 1237, and tapissiers, interested in his story, reproduced it on the loom. Perhaps it was one of these tapestries which inspired Chaucer's painted wall:

> And all the walls with colours fyne
> Were peynted, bothe text and glose
> Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.[8]

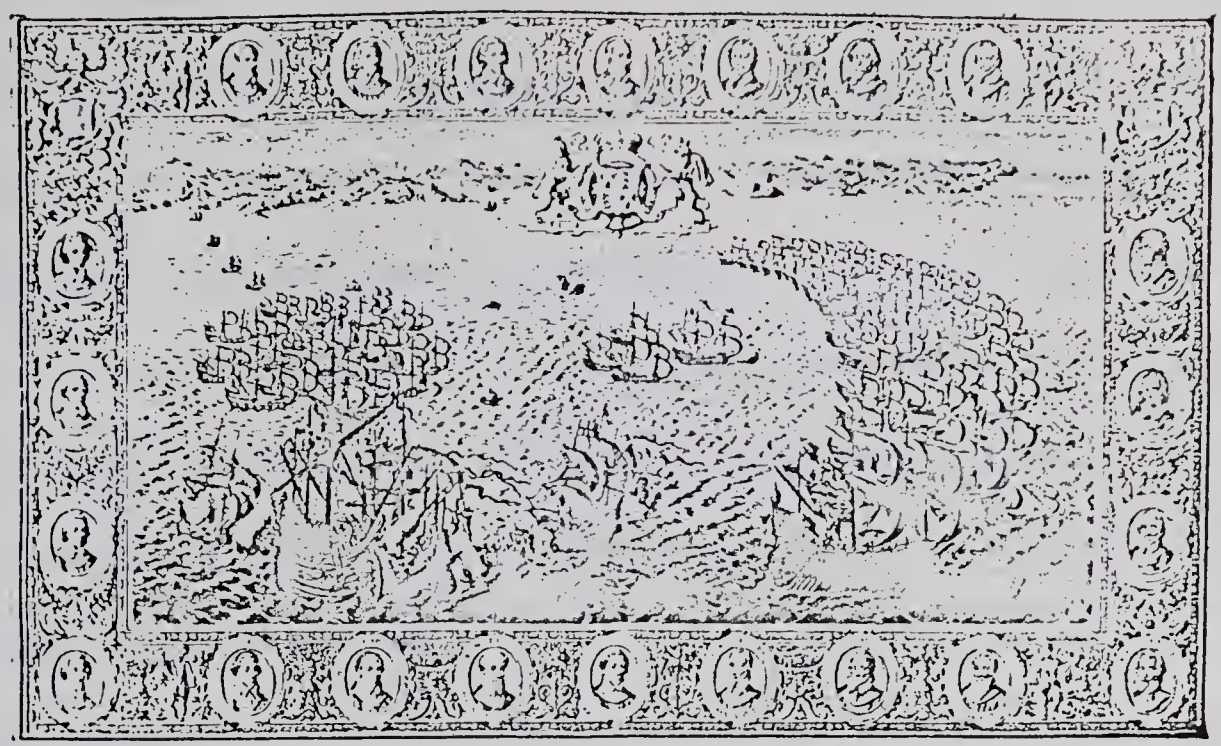
The unknown poet of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a little before Chaucer, reveals his awareness of the tapestry pattern by recognizing the foreign importation of tapestry, and by acknowledging the functional purpose it served.

There rose above her head
A comely canopy of costly cloth
From far Toulouse, with tapestry of Tars.[9]

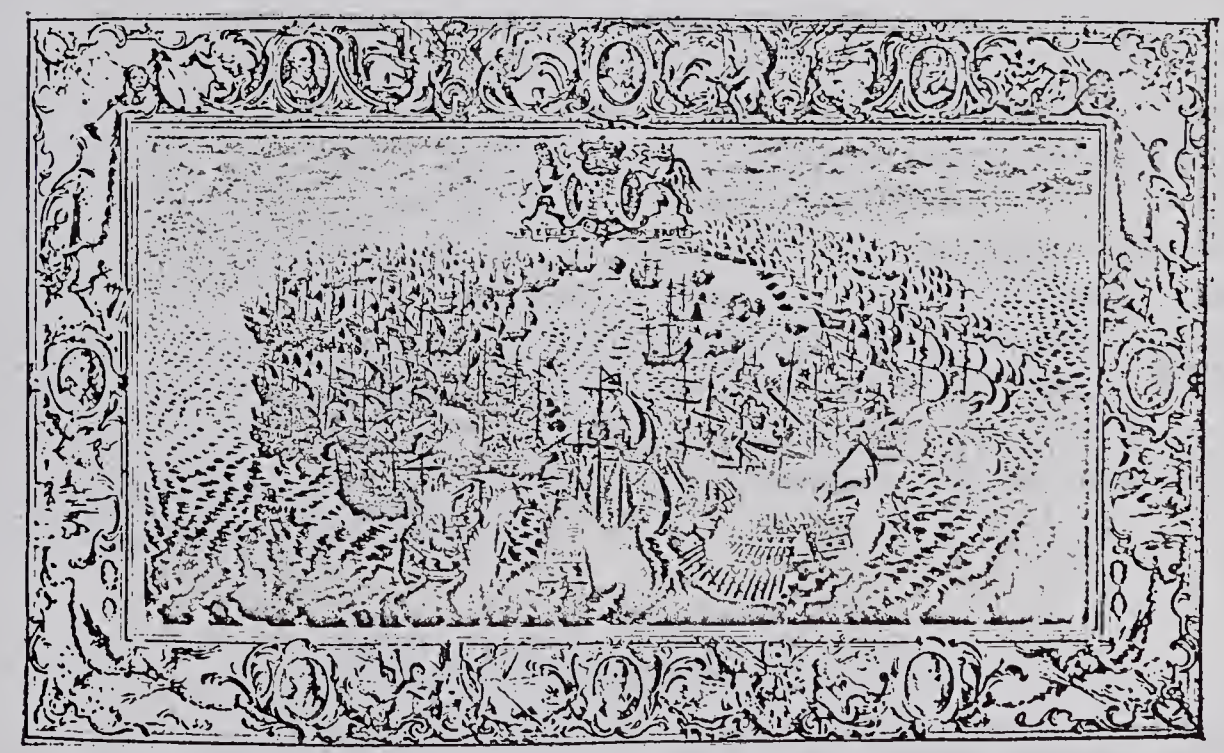
Queen Elizabeth and Tapestry

By Queen Elizabeth's time tapestry motifs were firmly established in English literature as a literary convention--and tapestry itself was still an accepted part of household furniture. At the time of his death, Henry VIII is reported to have possessed more than 2,560 pieces of tapestry, most of these being of French origin; and these, or most of them, came eventually to Elizabeth who accepted tapestry as part of the pageantry and display of royalty. Wherever she went in her "royal progresses" she was surrounded by this symbol of richness and splendour. Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, previous to the queen's visit in 1557, "had many beautiful pieces hung upon the walls of Kennilworth."[10] Cecil, Essex, Raleigh--all are known to have bought French and Flemish tapestries and to have used them to honour their queen. Paul Hentzner, a German who came to England in 1598, was impressed by the "excessively rich tapestries which were hung up when the queen gives audience to foreign ambassadors."[11]

For Elizabeth, tapestry was a symbol of the greatness she cherished for herself and for England. When England defeated the



The Galleon of De Valdez taken by Sir Francis Drake, the Armada in crescent form.



The Engagement off the Isle of Wight, July 22, 1588.

History of the Armada
From Engravings by John Pine

Spanish Armada in 1588, she authorized Lord Howard, the Admiral of the British fleet, to negotiate with Franz Spierinx, a Flemish weaver, for a set of tapestries commemorating the victory. The set, consisting of ten hangings, Elizabeth kept "laid up amongst the richest pieces of her wardrobe."[12] Unfortunately this token of British pride is no longer in existence. After Queen Elizabeth's death it was moved to the House of Lords and perished in the fire of 1834. Eugene Müntz has this to say of the set:

> More interesting in historical accuracy than in the requirements of decoration, the admiral caused the Spanish fleet to be represented struggling with the fury of the waves, or against the enemy eager in pursuit; the build of the vessels, their number, and the order of battle, all demonstrate the scrupulous efforts made. But the human element which, more than anything else, gives life and interest to a composition, was too completely sacrificed to these enormous engines of war, which only present to view their sides bristling with cannon. Almost banished from the chief scene, the human figure reappears in the borders adorned with the medalions of the principal English captains. We may say in exoneration of the Admiral and his artist, that they had the example of the tapestries of Middleburg, designed on similar principles; and that one hundred years later the naval battle of Messina was executed at the Gobelins, under Louis XIV, in exactly the same style.[13]

History and the Mirror Motif

Through the ages tapestry acquired an association with history. Its technology offered a visual record long before the days of the Gutenberg technology, and it was regarded as one means of preserving records of important events. Victories, battles, coronations, marriages--all found their place in the tapestry narrative, as tapestry became, in

a sense, a mirror reflecting public opinion.

The poet and historian used the "mirror" image for the emphasis which it gave to example and reflection. William Baldwin in his introduction to A Mirror For Magistrates makes this plain.

> Howe he [God] hath delt with sum of our countrymen your auncestors, for sundrye vices not yet left, this booke named A Mirrour for Magistrates, can shewe: which therefore I humbly offre unto your honors, beseching you to accept it favourably. For here as in a loking glas, you shall see (if any vice be in you) howe the like hath bene punished in other heretofore, whereby admonished, I trust it will be a good occasion to move you to the soner amendment. This is the chiefest ende, whye it is set furth, which God graunt it may attayne, . . . which might be as a myrrour for al men noble as others, to shewe the slyppery deceytes of the waveryng lady, and the due rewards of all kinde of vices.[14]

When Renaissance literature adopted the "mirror" image, although not consciously or obviously doing so, it was, in part, adopting a tapestry image because the tapissier used a mirror to watch the reflection of what he was weaving and to check the accuracy of his work. Indeed, it is questionable whether the "mirror" image would have been used to suggest political or historical reflection if the low-warp loom had not developed by means of a mirror.

When in Shakespeare we find "the mirror of all Christian kings,"[15] the connotation of the word "mirror" carries us to tapestry as well as to history and literature. The association of this image with tapestry opens to the mind the whole glory and magnificence of the field of tapestry as it must have appeared in the background of the French court when

Henry V invaded England and carried off as the spoils of war the fruit of French culture. It is quite probable that many of the choicest pieces of Henry V's tapestry collection were acquired as a result of this war.

I do not think that Shakespeare was consciously thinking of tapestry when he wrote Henry V. He was interested in people, not in things. Henry V is a play about war; it explores the rightness and the wrongness of war-like action. Tapestry was a luxury item and as such had no place in the main plot narrative. But, because the story was about kings, it would be there in the background--something which war would tend to destroy. Not only would the tapestries themselves become items of plunder, but the action of the war would interfere with the creation of new tapestries. Shakespeare, assessing the effects of war on the economy of a country, lets Burgundy express this idea:

> If I demand, before this Royall view
> What Rub, or what Impediment there is,
> Why that naked, poore, and mangled Peace,
> Dear nourse of Arts, Plentyes, and joyfull Births,
> Should not in this best Garden of the World,
> Our fertile France, put on her lovely Visage?
> Alas, Shee hath from France too long been chas'd,
> And all her Husbandry doth lye on heapes,
> Corrupting in it owne fertilities.
> (V, ii, 31-39)

Although the Duke of Burgundy does not mention tapestry in this speech, yet since tapestry was one of the "Arts," and one of the symbols of the "Plentyes" which marked French culture in the Middle Ages, it becomes

involved in the association of ideas which gives meaning to the passage. It is in the interplay of ideas that I see the real significance of the tapestry influence in Shakespeare's work.

Tapestry and Renaissance Translations

What I thought was one of the most interesting of the associations between poetry and tapestry, I discovered when I was investigating the historical background of the relationship between the two arts. The impact of the Renaissance brought to Elizabethan England a new and awakened interest in the works of the Latin and Greek masters. One of the ways that this interest made itself felt was in the number of translations undertaken by Elizabethan writers. Ovid, when he tells the story of Arachne and Minerva, describes the entire process of tapestry weaving. Let us look at Arthur Golding's translation of the contest.

Immediately they came
And tooke their places severally, and in a severall frame
Eche streynde a web, the warp whereof was fine. The web was tide
Upon a Beame. Betweene the warpe a stay of reede did slide.
The woofe on sharpened pinnes was put betwixt the warp, and wrought
With fingars. And as oft as they had through the warpe it brought,
They strake it with a Boxen combe. Both twaye of them mad hast:
And girding close for handsomnesse their garments to their wast
Bestirde their cunning handes apace. Their earnestnesse was such
As made them never thinke of paine. They weaved verie much
Fine Purple that was dide in Tyre, and colours set so trim
That eche in shadowing other seemde the very same with him.
Even like as after showres of raine when Phebus broken beames
Doe strike upon the Cloudes, appeares a compast bow of gleames
Which bendeth over all the Heaven: wherein although there shine

A thousand sundry colours, yet the shadowing is so fine,
That looke men nere so wistly, yet beguileth it their eyes:
So like and even the selfsame thing eche colour seemes to rise
Whereas they meete, which further off doe differ more and more.
Of glittring golde with silken threade was weaved there good store.
And stories put in portrayture of things done long afore.
Minerva painted Athens towne and Marsis rocke therin,
And all the strife betweene hirselfe and Neptune, who should win
The honor for to give the name to that same noble towne.
In loftie thrones on eyther side of Jove were settled downe
Six Peeres of Heaven with countnance grave and full of Majestie,
And every of them by his face discerned well might be.
The Image of the mightie Jove was Kinglike. She had made
Neptunus standing striking with his long thre tyned blade
Upon the ragged Rocke: and from the middle of the clift
She portrayed issuing out a horse, which was the noble gift
For which he chalengde to himselfe the naming of the towne.
She picturde out himselfe with shielde and Morion on hir crowne
With Curet on hir brest, and Speare in hand with sharpened ende.
She makes the Earth (the which hir Speare doth seeme to strike) to sende
An Olyf tree with fruite thereon: and that the Gods thereat
Did wonder: and with victorie she finisht up that plat.
Yet to th'intent examples olde might make it to be knowne
To hir that for desire of praise so stoutly held hir owne,
What guerdon she shoulde hope to have for hir attempt so madde,
Foure like contentions in the foure last corners she did adde.
The Thracians Heme and Rodope the foremost corner hadde:
Who being sometime mortall folke usurpt to them the name
Of Jove and Juno, and were turned to mountains for the same.
A Pigmie womans piteous chaunce the second corner shewde,
Whome Juno turned to a Crane (bicause she was so lewd
As for to stand at strife with hir for beautie) charing hir
Against hir native countriefolke continuall war to stir.
The thirde had proude Antigone, who durst of pride contende
In beautie with the wife of Jove: by whome she in the ende
Was turned to a Storke. No whit availed hir the towne
Of Troy, or that Laomedon hir father ware a crowne,
But that she, clad in feathers white, hir lazie wings must flap.
And with a bobbed Bill bewayle the cause of hir missehap.
The last had chyldelesse Cinyras: who being turned to stone,
Was pictured prostrate on the grounde, and weeping all alone,
And culling fast betweene his armes a Temples greeces fine
To which his daughters bodies were transformde by wrath divine.

The utmost borders had a wreath of Olyf round about,
And this is all the worke the which Minerva portrayd out.
For with the tree which she herself had made but late afore
She bounded in hir Arass cloth, and then did worke no more,
The Lydian maiden in hir web did portray to the full
How Europe was by royall Jove beguilde in shape of Bull.
A swimming Bull, a swelling Sea, so lively had she wrought,
That Bull and Sea in very deede ye might them well have thought.
The Ladie seemed looking backe to landwarde and to crie
Upon hir women, and to feare the water sprinkling hie,
And shrinking up hir fearfull feete. She portrayd also there
Asteriee struggling with an Erne which did away hir beare.
And over Leda she had made a Swan his wings to splay.
She added also how by Jove in shape of Satyr gaye
The Antiope with a paire of children was besped:
And how he tooke Amphitrios shape when in Alcemas bed
He gate the worthie Hercules: and how he also came
To Danae like a shoure of golde, to Aegine like a flame,
A sheepeherd to Mnemosyne, and like a serpent sly
To Proserpine. She also made Neptunus leaping by
Upon a Maide of Aeolus race in likenesse of a Bull,
And in the streame Enipeus shape begetting on a trull
The Giants Othe and Ephialt, and in the shape of Ram
Begetting one Theophane Bisalties ympe with Lam,
And in a lustie Stalions shape she made him covering there
Dame Ceres with the yellow lockes, and hir whose golden heare
Was turned to sprawling Snakes: on whom he gate the winged horse.
She made him in a Dolphins shape Melantho to enforce.
Of all these things she missed not their proper shapes,
Nor yet the full and just resemblance of their places for to hit.
In likenesse of a Countrie cloyne was Phebus picturde there,
And how he now ware Gossehaukes wings, and now a Lion's heare.
And how he in a shepherdes shape was practising a wile
The daughter of one Macarie, Dame Issa, to beguile.
And how the faire Erygone by chaunce did suffer rape
By Bacchus who deceived hir in likenesse of a grape.
And how that Saturn in shape of Genet did beget
The double Chiron. Round about the utmost Verdge was set
A narrow Traile of pretie floures with leaves of Ivie fret.
Not Pallas, no, nor spight it selfe could any quarrell picke
To this hir worke: and that did touch Minerva to the quicke.
Who thereupon did rend the cloth in pieces every whit,
Because the lewdnesse of the Gods was blaz'd so in it.
And with an Arras weavers combe of Box she fiercely smit
Arachne on the forehead full a dozen times and more.[16]

The story continues, telling how Arachne was transformed into a spider and "practiseth in shape of Spider still/the Spinners and the Websters crafts of which she erst had skill." The pictures which Ovid describes as the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva could pass anywhere as fabric woven by expert Renaissance tapissiers. Minerva featured "contests" as the theme of her weaving. The central illustration of her panel showed the gods contesting for the honour of naming Athens. In each corner of the tapestry, as a warning to Arachne, she wove a scene depicting the fate of foolish mortals who dared to question the supremacy of the gods. Then she finished her picture with a fine border of olive leaves.

Arachne's tapestry was also organized around a central theme. She showed the "love affairs" of the gods, stressing the treachery by which they were able to seduce unsuspecting mortals. Her tapestry she finished with an elaborate border gay with flowers intertwined with ivy. Golding's translation reads like the description of a Renaissance tapestry.

It is impossible to generalize the characteristics of Renaissance art, but if one were to try--its monumentality, its drama, and its bombast could be isolated as features revealing themselves in a mixture of baroque line and naturalistic detail. In the Loom of Art, Germain Bazin refers to the fragrance of nature which impregnated

the whole of European art at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. What the artists sought to discover about animal and plant life, the weavers converted into a naturalism which dominated French tapestry, creating "whole series of tapestries that turned the rooms of princes into an eternal springtime. Flowers surrounded by a whole miniature world that lived in their neighbourhood; . . . butterflies, dragon flies, beetles, birds, and small animals. . . made their entry into painting a source of inspiration which has never been exhausted."[17] In early Renaissance tapestry the borders were simple, but the tapestries of the late Renaissance had borders wide and elaborate--with swags, scrolls, masks, trellises, urns, sculptures, or other ornamentation carrying in symbolic form the message of the main picture. The love of the heroic was evident in the clusters of huge, over-dramatic figures rendered with exaggerated high-lights.

The pictures which Ovid described fired the imagination of Golding who saw in the miniature sketches of Ovid an elaborate and flowery "Arras." How his imagination worked in translation can be seen by only a brief comparison of two simple passages. The words of Ovid:

> Circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras,
> Is modus est operisque sua facit arbore finem[18]

became in Golding's flowery language:

> For with the tree which she herselfe had made but late afore
> She bounded in hir Arras cloth, and then did work no more.[19]

Golding's translation apparently bears the impact of his familiarity with contemporary tapestry. Because it does this, the translation must be recognized as one example of the way in which literature can reveal a poet's "awareness of tapestry." A similar type of contemporary awareness becomes evident when we compare Proverbs VII, xvi of the King James' version of the Bible with the same verse as it appears in the Revised Standard Edition of 1952.

> I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

> I have decked my couch with coverings, coloured threads of Egyptian linen.

Tapestry, a Device of Atmosphere

The word "tapestry" used in the King James' version, because of the socially accepted position in contemporary house furnishings, adds to the account of the young whore preparing to seduce her lover a feeling of artificiality and passionate sumptuousness which, although not so apparent today, would have been self-evident to the average reader in 1611.

It was the power of this same connotative association which Spenser depended upon when he pictured the House of Busirane.

> For round about the wals yclothed were
> With goodly arras of great majesty:
> Woven with gold and silk so near
> That the rich metall lurked privily
> As faining to be hid from envious eye.
> Yet here, and there, and everywhere unawares
> It shewed itself, and shone unwillingly;
> Like a discoloured Snake, whose hideous snares
> Through the Green Grass his long bright burnished
> back declares.[20]

The figures in the Busirane tapestries were clearly indicated in the verses following the one just quoted. Spenser used them to symbolize the joy and fierceness of a love set up within an atmosphere where passion became the object of idolatry. In Ovid we saw a foolish, ostentatious display becoming part of tapestry; Renaissance poets reversed the process by showing tapestry as part of an ostentatious display. The device which Spenser used when he gave us the Busirane tapestry is the same device which, with quite a different effect, was used by Shakespeare in Cymbeline. The Shakespeare tapestry we will discuss later. What we need to do now is to summarize the qualities which lie hidden within the tradition which Shakespeare and his contemporaries inherited.

The Convention and the Tradition

The type of tapestry awareness which emerges as a direct social allusion closely related to the arts of contemporary life is the most common form in which we find evidence of the tapestry tradition in literature. This we saw illustrated in Golding's translation of the Arachne-Minerva story. What we saw there was a sixteenth century awareness superimposed upon the original awareness of the Roman poet. Ovid saw how the poet could use the techniques of the tapissier

to weave together the visual and the moral; to blend legendary stories with a comment on foolish pride. Ovid grouped his figures in definite patterns identified as woven patterns. Golding associated this weaving with tapestry, but other poets have used the same type of grouping, sometimes with, sometimes without any direct tapestry association--Chaucer in his "Knight's Tale," Spenser in the pictorial effects of his Faerie Queene, and Shakespeare in the juxtapositioning of contrasting elements in his plays. I suspect that what we have here is an unconscious reflection of the same technique which Ovid was consciously using.

The literary evidence of the tapestry influence is not limited in any way as to the form which it will take. It may occur as a metaphor, as an allusion, as a description of some phase of the tapestry craft or even as a picture of an actual piece of tapestry. It may grow out of the poet's conscious thinking of the record, the background, the story which the tapestry provides, or it may grow out of his consciousness of the use to which the tapestry is put, or of the relationship between tapestry and his own craft or between tapestry and other arts or crafts. The use of a tapestry motif may be a conscious use or an unconscious reproduction of tapestry configurations and lines. We need only to turn to the magnificent description of Cleopatra to discover how all these modes of awareness may have combined to operate in the mind of Shakespeare.

The Barge she sat in, like a burnisht Throne
Burnt on the water: the Poope was beaten Gold,
Purple the Sailes: and so perfumed that
The Windes were Love-sick.
With them the Owers were Silver,
Which to the tune of Flutes kept stroke, and made
The waters which they beat to follow faster;
As amorous of their strokes. For her owne person,
It beggard all description, she did lye
In her Pavillion, cloth of Gold, of Tissue
O're-picturing that Venus, where we see
The fancie out-worke Nature. On each side her,
Stood pretty Dimpled Boyes, like Smiling Cupids,
With divers coulour'd Fannes whose winde did seeme,
To gloue the delicate cheeks which they did coole,
And what they undid did. . . .
Her Gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many Mermaids tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adornings. At the Helme,
A seeming Mermaide steeres: The Silken Tackle,
Swell with the touches of those Flower-soft Hands,
That yarely frame the office. From the Barge
A strange, invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent Wharfes. The City cast
Her people out upon her; and Anthony
Enthron'd in the Market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to th' ayre: w hich but for vacancie,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in Nature.
(II, ii, 196-223)

CHAPTER III

TAPESTRY AWARENESS AND SHAKESPEARE

Patrick Crutwell tells us that Shakespeare "reduces all things--as he had to, being a dramatist, and as he was impelled to, being born a dramatist--to terms of human beings."[1] Perhaps this is the reason that so much of the technical language of the tapissier is missing from the Shakespeare script. Shakespeare was interested in people, not things. When he arranged his neat tableaux, or juxtaposed his contrasting effects, his mind moved from the rigidity and the limitations fixed by medieval art patterns to the broader outlook where tensions, ominousness, and doubts found a place in the balance of traditional values. When he thought of a tapestry, his mind dwelt, not on the movement of a shuttle or the interweaving of coloured threads, but on the human personality behind the tapestry.

The tapissier's was a specialized art but the poet could reach out through the medium of language beyond the barriers of the technology. Perhaps our best illustration of this lies in King Lear. The words of Edmund, "the better best, this weaves itselfe perforce into my businesse," (II, i, 17) are followed a little later in the same scene by the words of Regan, "thus out of season, thredding dark ey'd night" (119).

Surely it is not merely coincidence that the imagery of "weaving" and "threading" occur in the right relationship to be significant guides to the plot development of the play.. It is this meeting between Edmund and Regan which highlights the darker elements of the tragedy as Shakespeare begins to weave together his main and secondary plots.

Shakespeare can be compared to a tapissier. In writing his plays he wove together various coloured threads, juxtapositioning separate plots and scenes so that one high-lighted the other by the effects of contrast or repetition. Like the tapissier, he often borrowed the designs that he used. Indeed, we sometimes feel that there may be little original in Shakespeare's work except the way in which he handles his material. Wyndham Lewis has called him "a particularly glorious parasite."[2] He borrows shamelessly, drawing on a suggestion here, an idea there, lifting a phrase, even a whole narrative from the works of another author; but the harmony which emerges from his multiple plots and diverse settings is analogous with the effects which the tapissier is able to achieve as he blends together the separate panels of his tapestry set. The modern mind, in dealing with this aggregation of materials, would probably think in terms of motion picture technology. The comparison would be apt for what Shakespeare did in the live theatre the modern film editor does by "montage."

The example cited from King Lear is not an isolated example of Shakespeare's awareness of the weaving technique. While Shakespeare does not parade his knowledge of the technique, he refers to it often enough to make us realize that he was aware of its existence.

> My Brayne, more busie than the laboring Spider,
> Weaves tedious Snares to trap mine Enemies.
> (2 Henry VI, i, 338-9)

> Must I do so? and must I ravell out
> My weav'd-up follyes?
> (Richard II, IV, i, 229)

> And yet the spacious bredth of this division
> Admits no Orifex for a point as subtle,
> As Ariachnes broken woofe to enter:
> (Troylus and Cressida, V, ii, 150-2)

> O Fates! come, come: Cut thread and thrum,
> (A Midsummernight's Dreame, V, i, 387)

These examples serve to illustrate the nature of the Shakespearean allusion to the weaver's craft. It is more often general than specific. Most of the common technical terms are missing. I could not locate such terms as lisse, bobbin, loom, etc. in a Shakespearean concordance.[3] To me this lack suggests that Shakespeare's awareness of tapestry did not extend to any intimate knowledge of the technology. His interest in tapestry was apparently limited to his association with its functional uses, and to configurations from actual tapestries with which he was familiar.

It is difficult to determine on the evidence of his plays which

actual tapestries he knew, but several of the more common Elizabethan tapestries can be identified.

> Sometimes like the shaven Hercules in the smircht worm-eaten tapestrie.
> (Much Ado about Nothing, III, iii, 137-8)

> Ah Rogue, I love thee: Thou art as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon, and tenne times better than the nine Worthies.
> (2 Henry IV, II, iv, 236-38)

The imitation tapestry or painted hanging is identified at least once by the subject content of the hanging.

> Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking: and for thy walles a pretty slight Drollery, or the storie of the Prodigall, or the Germane hunting in Waterworke, is worth a thousand of these Bed-hangings, and these Fly-bitten Tapistries.
> (2 Henry IV, II, i, 155-159)

In Cymbeline we find the best evidence of Shakespeare's familiarity with actual tapestry.

> It was hang'd
> With Tapistry of Silke, and Silver, the Story
> Proud Cleopatra, when she met her Roman,
> And Sidnus swell'd above the Bankes, or for
> The presse of Boates, or Pride. A peece of Worke
> So bravely done, so rich, that it did strive
> In Workemanship, and Value, which I wonder'd
> Could be so rarely, and exactly wrought
> Since the true life on't was -
> (Cymbeline, II, iv, 70-78)

This is the tapestry with which Shakespeare adorned the room of Imogen; rich, magnificent, in workmanship so splendid that it might have been woven by one of the leading tapissiers in France or the Netherlands. The probabilities are that this is a literary tapestry, created by Shakespeare specifically for Imogen's room, but it pays a tribute to the skill of the tapissier which suggests that it had its inspiration from some

familiarity with the quality of tapestry produced on the best looms in Arras, Brussels, or Paris.

Shakespeare, like Spenser and others who used the convention before him, was aware of the effectiveness of a tapestry allusion to establish a definite atmosphere. Unlike Spenser, he did not always associate tapestry with luxury and wealth. Notice the effect of the "smirch'd, worm-eaten tapestrie" in Much Ado About Nothing. In Cymbeline, however, he is trying to give an impression of the very best. The Cleopatra tapestry is only part of the evidence indicating the care he used in selecting the items for Imogen's room. The chimney piece and the roof of the chamber, like the tapestry itself, reflect Elizabethan interest in classical antiquity; but they reflect also Italian influence on sixteenth century art which, in the over-all pattern of Cymbeline, is an important part of the thematic exploration which gives meaning to the play.

At first glance, the Cleopatra tapestry seems to be merely a plot device borrowed from a conventional room setting, part of the machinery by which Iachimo is able to deceive Posthumus. But a closer study of the play will reveal the subtlety of Shakespeare's genius. The actual tapestry is associated with Imogen, and in this play Imogen is the essence of royalty. "The Flame o' the Taper bowes toward her," says Iachimo (II, ii, 21). Even Cloten, from

whom we scarcely expect a sincere tribute, has this to say:

> For she's Faire and Royall,
> And that she hath all courtly parts more exquisite
> Than Lady, Ladies, Woman, from every one
> The best she hath, and she of all compounded,
> Out-selles them all.
> (III, v, 70-74)

A lesser genius than Shakespeare would have explained the implications of the tapestry but he took them for granted, and trusted his audience, too, would take them for granted. "Perfected tapestries," says Leland Hunter, "were not a popular art based on folk-tales, and created by provincial artists and weavers. They were a rich man's art, elaborated for the decoration of palatial castles, and for the delectation and comfort of the aristocracy."[4] If this were true of the Middle Ages, it was even truer for the age of the Renaissance when artists of all classes sought to preserve the glorious display of arms and liveries which marked the movements of the great. It was this movement which led to the glorification in tapestry of such national events as the victory over the Spanish Armada. The patrons of tapestry were the great--the dukes, the kings, and the popes. France led the patronage, but England, Spain, and Italy were not far behind.

The Cleopatra piece described by Shakespeare may well have been drawn from the details of an actual tapestry, although I can find no record of an extant Cleopatra set dating prior to Shakespeare's time. Still, since the history of tapestry is incomplete, this is no

proof that such a set did not exist. The Cleopatra story was popular in Queen Elizabeth's day. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has in its possession today five pieces which have been identified as part of a Cleopatra set woven in 1635. This one may have been the first, or there may have been an earlier set of which the records have been lost. I do not think that it really matters whether Shakespeare created this tapestry himself, or whether he copied it from an original. The thing that is important is that he caught the spirit of the Renaissance tapestry and that he used this tapestry to enrich the theme of his play.

We get the impression from Shakespeare's description that the composition of this tapestry is in accord with the rules which govern the construction of the great Gothic tapestries:

> human figures and trees and buildings architecturally arranged with a maximum of vertical and a minimum of horizontal effects, with a minimum of shadows and a maximum of large line and colour contrasts--adjacent personages in contrasting colours, personages in the foreground pushed forward by personages and architecture in the middle ground; pushed forward by personages and architecture and landscape on a smaller scale in the upper ground. The design as a whole. . . silhouetted without attempt at sculptural presentations in the round.[5]

One can visualize the figures of Anthony and Cleopatra in the foreground, rich with all the splendour of a royal queen and her retinue, made to stand out by the placing of the accompanying boats and the shoreline of the Cydnus. In keeping with the best in Gothic tapestry, even the clouds in the sky would pick up the story and reflect the

splendour and the glory of Rome. Shakespeare does not say all this, but he speaks of "the workmanship and value," and of the exactness with which the picture was wrought. The Elizabethan audience, familiar with the soft, silky texture of a well-worked tapestry, would readily visualize the details brought out through the magic of ribs, slits, and hatchings which were able to "produce effects far stronger on a large scale than those of brush and chisel."[6] Like Arthur Golding, and like the author of the "Book of Proverbs," Shakespeare was depending on contemporary awareness of the qualities of good tapestry.

Without a doubt, when he created the Cleopatra tapestry, Shakespeare had in mind the picture he had drawn when he wrote Anthony and Cleopatra. One needs only to set the passage quoted earlier beside the passage describing the Cymbeline tapestry to recognize the similarity. The splendour of the Roman world is part of the picture of Anthony and Cleopatra, as it is, through the connotation of the Cleopatra tapestry, a part of the background of Cymbeline. Cleopatra's world is a world where the sensual imagination is lost in the gratifying imagination of boundless fulfilment. It is a world where elements of frustration accompany the expression of desire and where politics interfere with personal pleasure.[7] Shakespeare, when he was writing Cymbeline, was not interested in the splendour which was Rome's political heritage but rather in the decay which set in when Rome yielded to the power

which Cleopatra herself breathed forth even when breathless.

> Other women cloy
> The appetites they feede, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.
> (Anthony and Cleopatra, II, ii, 247-49)

The thought of the cloyed will and the unsatisfied desire is picked up in Cymbeline by Iachimo who is the representative of this vitiated force.

> The Cloyed will:
> That satiate yet unsatisfi'd desire; that Tub
> Both fill'd and running: Ravening first the Lambe,
> Longs after for the Garbage.
> (Cymbeline, I, viii, 56-59)

It would be interesting to explore the triple setting of the play and the way in which Shakespeare weaves together threads from the court of Cymbeline, the house of Philarius in Rome, and the pastoral mountains of Wales, using the weaving to probe the less desirable effects of the Renaissance on the Elizabethan court. But, this treatment would take us away from our main subject. We are concerned with this approach only insofar as the Cleopatra tapestry is part of the study. By itself, the tapestry was a thing of beauty; but as it was used by Iachimo, it became a destructive force, sowing discord and distrust in the mind of Posthumus and bringing unhappiness to Imogen. The tapestry is important because it provides the first real clue to the themes which bring a type of unity to the diversified structure of Cymbeline.

Pictures of the age reveal that instead of hanging ceiling to

floor as tapestry did in the medieval days, it now blended in with the wainscotting and other ornamentation of the room. John Phillips, writing on the Metropolitan Museum's collection of Renaissance tapestries, distinguishes the Medieval from the Renaissance.

> Then their function had been architectural; to all appearances they were the walls, decorative and warmth-retaining, of halls and chambers. During the Renaissance they were no longer fully identified with the walls on which they were hung, a change due partly to the adoption of canons of the classical style for interior architecture. In accordance with the new taste, all decorative elements not permanently incorporated into a room tended to be given a secondary role. And among these were tapestries.[8]

The tapestry in Imogen's room would seem to fall in with Renaissance practice, but in those plays where tapestry was used as a place of concealment the old floor to ceiling practice would seem to be indicated.

When tapestry was first used in England as a covering for the walls, it was attached to the bare walls in the same manner as in those countries from which the custom was borrowed. However, the dampness of the climate and the moisture collecting on the wood or brick produced a mould which caused the woollen fibres of the tapestry fabric to deteriorate quickly. The practice of suspending the tapestry from a wooden frame so that it hung free of the walls was adopted to combat this mould and to remove the tapestry from exposure to dampness. This left a space of from two to four feet between the wall and covering. A person wanting secret access to a room could easily hide undetected there. The evidence in Shakespeare's plays reveals that he

was interested in this space. Perhaps because the area between the tapestry and the wall provided an easy plot device that could be effectively used in drama as a plausible hiding place.

The first play that we find it used in is The Life and Death of King John. Hubert is talking to the executioners as they plan for the murder of the young Prince.

> Heate me these Irons hot, and looke thou stand
> Within the Arras: When I strike my foot
> Upon the bosom of the ground, rush forth
> And binde the boy, which you shall finde with me
> Fast to the chaire: be heedfull: hence, and watch.
> (IV, i, 1-5)

We find it again in Much Ado About Nothing.

> Borachio: Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoaking a a musty room, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in hand in sad conference: I whipt behind the Arras, and there heard it agreed upon, that the Prince should wooe Hero for himselfe, and having obtain'd her, give her to Count Claudio.
> (I, iii, 58-63)

In King John the tapestry was a simple plot device, but here it seems to have gained an added significance, for there is a thematic implication in its use which is important to the play as a whole. The plot of Much Ado About Nothing develops from the incident of the spying Borachio until his treachery reaches a climax with Hero's rejection in the church. The griminess of the walls becomes associated with Borachio and through him with Don John. To verify the associations suggested here we need only to consider the second incident in which the tapestry

allusion is used. Again it is Borachio speaking:

> Seest thou not (I say) that a deformed thiefe this fashion is, how giddily 'a turnes about all the Hot-blouds, betweene foureteene & five and thirtie, sometimes fashioning them like Pharaoes soldiers in the rechie painting, sometime like god Bels priests in the old Church window, sometimes like the shaven Hercules in the smircht worm-eaten tapestrie, where his cod-peece seemes as massie as his club.
> (III, iv, 132-139)

No one can question the atmosphere of sordidness associated with this incident and forming part of the whole trick played on Hero.

In I Henry IV the arras is used again as a hiding place. The implications are somewhat different from those appearing in Much Ado About Nothing. Treachery is not involved this time. The Sheriff was searching for Falstaff, and Prince Hal, to protect his friend, interceded. "Goe hide thee behinde the Arras, the rest walke up above. Now my Masters, for a true Face and good Conscience," (II, iv, 543-45). When the Sheriff left, Hal and his friends found Falstaff "fast asleepe behinde the Arras, and snorting like a Horse" (II, iv, 577-78). The incident is used as part of the basic groundwork for a humorous exchange between Hal and Falstaff, and the Hostess of the Inn becomes involved when Falstaff complained to her that a valuable ring had been stolen from his pocket. "The other Night I fell asleepe heere behind the Arras, and had my Pocket pickt" (III, iii, 113).

When Hal tells us, at the end of Act I, Scene II, that his idleness is only a temporary foil to set off his reformation, he does not

make any reference to tapestry in the course of his soliloquy, but when we look back at the soliloquy from the incident of the sleeping Falstaff, we find that the soliloquy gains in significance from the implications carried back to it from the tapestry episode. Just as the tapestry hid Falstaff from the eyes of the Sheriff, so the actions of the Prince hide from the world the King who will one day emerge. These years of seeming irresponsibility in the life of Prince Hal have a purpose in the development of the future king just as the space between the arras and the wall served a useful purpose in the insulation of the room.

In Henry IV we find Shakespeare experimenting with a technique which, in Hamlet, was to become one of the major devices. By placing Falstaff behind the arras and thus separating "Justice" and "Folly," Hal assumed a role which pointed symbolically to that final separation at the end of 2 Henry IV. We are reminded of the tapestry motif in the second play when Falstaff makes his peace with Mistress Quickly, and persuades her that she might sell her tapestry to finance him. Tapestry is not used as a hiding place in this play, but the reader, coming to this bit of dialogue--

Prince. Well, thus we play the Fooles with the time & the spirits of the wise, sit in the clouds, and mocke us: Is your Master heere in London?
Bard. Yes my Lord.
Prince. Where suppes he? Doth the old Bore, feede in the old Franke?
Bard. At the old place my Lord, in East-cheape.

Prince. What Company?
Bard. Ephesians my Lord, of the old Church.
Prince. Sup any women with him?
Bard. None my Lord, but Mistris Quickly, and M. Doll Teare-sheet.
(II, ii, 144-155)

will remember that it was in Mistress Quickly's tavern that Falstaff fell asleep behind the arras. In Hamlet Shakespeare expands the symbolic role of the arras until it permeates the whole structure of the play, but the use of the arras in Hamlet is of sufficient importance to command a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARRAS IN HAMLET

Shakespeare wrote for a Renaissance audience, and if we are to appreciate the play which he wrote, and the use which he makes of the arras, then we must try to visualize his play as it was seen by the audience for which it was written. As soon as we try to place ourselves in the position of that audience, we find that the arras gains in significance. In the days of the Renaissance tapestry was a symbol of luxury and magnificence. It was a part of the Renaissance Court. Letters, diaries, travel journals, and contemporary inventories all confirm its widespread use.

William Harrison, an Elizabethan chronicler, writes in his A Description of England, 1587:

> in noble men's houses it is not rare to see abundance of Arras, rich hangings of tapistrie, silver vessell, and so much other plate, as may furnish sundrie cupbords, to the summe often times of a thousand or two thousand pounds at the least: whereby the value of this and the rest of their stuffe dooth grow to be almost inestimable. Likewise in the houses of knights, gentlemen, merchantmen, and some other wealthie citizens, it is not geson to behold generallie their great provision of tapistrie, Turkish worke, pewter, brasse, fine linen, and thereto costlie cupbords of plate.[1]

Perhaps the most revealing descriptions of the Elizabethan Court come from foreign observers who brought a fresh and objective

eye to the scene. We have already noted Paul Hentzner's reaction when he visited Greenwich Palace. Rathgeb, another German visitor, wrote of Hampton Court:

> All apartments and rooms in this immensely large structure are hung with rich tapestry of pure gold and fine silk, so exceedingly beautiful and royally ornamented that it would be hardly possible to find more magnificent things of the kind in any other place. In particular, there is one apartment belonging to the Queen, in which she is accustomed to sit in state, costly beyond everything; the tapestries are garnished with gold, pearls, and precious stones. . . .[2]

An Elizabethan audience would have seen tapestry in every room of Claudius' palace, and would have accepted its presence there long before Shakespeare introduced the actual tapestry motif. Hamlet was a Renaissance Prince, surrounded by a Renaissance Court, in an age when intrigue and careful planning were the keynote to politics and society. The Elizabethan audience would have recognized in him a representative of the type of young man who frequented Elizabeth's court, a young man trained and educated for court life.

> The Courtiers, Soldiers, Schollers: Eye, tongue, sword.
> The expectansie and Rose of the faire State,
> The glasse of Fashion, and the mould of Forme,
> The observed of all Observers, . . .
> (Hamlet, III, i, 156-160)

Such a character in Queen Elizabeth's day could only be conceived of against the background of a court life.

I suspect that the most successful productions of Hamlet are those which, without trying to be too authentic, carry a suggestion of

the Renaissance background. The use of tapestry provides one of the easiest methods of giving us a visual hint of the Renaissance. When Stuart Vaughan produced Hamlet at the Phoenix Theatre in New York in 1961, he emphasized background by the use which he made of tapestry portraits. Writing of the scene in Gertrude's room, he says:

> I used tapestry all around Gertrude's room with full-length portraits of various Danish kings, among them Claudius and old Hamlet, whom young Hamlet singled out at "Look here, upon this picture, and on this---." Later, when the ghost appeared, he was revealed by light directly behind his portrait through the scrim of the tapestry (which heretofore had seemed opaque).[3]

This use of tapestry is good theatre technique. Not only does it provide a prop necessary for this scene, but even more important it provides a piece of furniture which blends into and becomes part of the background for the action of the play.

I do not think that I shall ever forget the first live production of Hamlet that I was privileged to watch. Neither the acting nor the interpretation was outstanding, but the setting, simple in extreme with a piece of stage tapestry forming the background for all the court scenes, was extremely effective. This was an amateur production, produced by an amateur director with inexperienced young actors. For them, Hamlet was not a play to be studied in the classroom. It was living theatre. In many ways their enthusiasm made up for what they lacked in experience. Their production of Hamlet, like that of

Stuart Vaughan, used tapestry for Renaissance background.

Could it be that Shakespeare used a tapestry backdrop for this play? Unfortunately, no agreement exists among scholars as to what props were available in the Elizabethan theatre. Illustrations of The Globe, such as the one reproduced by Dr. John Adams (see page 48), show how easily tapestry could have been used as part of the Hamlet set. It is natural to think of Hamlet on a stage resembling this one; alone, speaking the words of his first soliloquy, his sombre black set off by contrast with the colouring of the tapestry behind him. It does not seem credible that a dramatist of Shakespeare's skill and ability would miss the opportunity of using a technique as simple and effective as this.

The more I think of the picture, the better I like it. Regardless of what props were available in the Elizabethan theatre, Shakespeare could have used this technique. The Elizabethan audience, unlike a modern audience, did not have to have their background props spelled out in realistic detail. If they had been guided to imagine tapestry in the background, the effect, for them, would have been the same as it is for a twentieth century audience when the tapestry is visible on stage.

If we look at the theatre sketch again, and imagine the back curtains removed so that we can see the inner stage, we will have a

The Globe Theatre

Model constructed by Dr. John Crawford Adams
Now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, U.S.A.

reasonable facsimile of one area in a Renaissance home, with the rooms not subdivided by walls but extending into a long gallery. Notice the illustration of Sutton Place (page 50) with the tapestry adorning the full-length of its walls. Then think of Hamlet. Most of the scenes require just such a setting as this. Perhaps Shakespeare counted on the imagination supplying this type of detail. It was nothing new for him to ask his audience to use their imagination. In Henry V he had asked them to imagine more than this.

> O For a Muse of Fire, that would ascend
> The brightest Heaven of Invention:
> A Kingdome for a Stage, Princes to Act,
> And Monarchs to behold the swelling Scene.
> Then should the Warlike Harry, like himselfe,
> Assume the Port of Mars, and at his heeles
> (Leasht in, like Hounds) should Famine, Sword, and Fire
> Crouch for employment. But pardon, Gentles all:
> The flat unraysed Spirits, that hath dar'd,
> On this unworthy Scaffold, to bring forth
> So great an Object. Can this Cock-Pit hold
> The vastie fields of France? Or may we cramme
> Within this Woodden O, the very Caskes
> That did affright the Ayre at Agincourt?
> O pardon: since a crooked Figure may
> Attest in little place a Million,
> And let us, Cyphers, to this great Accompt,
> On your imaginarie Forces worke.
> Suppose within the Girdle of these Walls
> Are now confin'd two mightie Monarchies. . .
> Peece out our imperfections with your thoughts.
> (The Life of Henry the Fift, Prologue, 1-23)

Usually, however, when Shakespeare wanted the audience to use their imagination, he supplied a clue. There are no obvious clues in the first act of Hamlet but I think I discovered what would have been

Sutton Place, Surrey

The Gallery from the top of the staircase

a clue to the Elizabethan audience.

> O that this too too solid Flesh, would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a Dew:
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixt
> His Canon 'gainst Selfe-slaughter. O God, O God!
> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seemes to me all the uses of this world?
> Fie on't? Oh fie, fie, 'tis an unweeded Garden
> That growes to Seed: Things rank, and grosse in Nature
> Possesse it meerely. That it should come to this
> But two months dead: Nay, not so much; not two,
> So excellent a King that was to this
> Hyperion to a Satyre: so loving to my Mother,
> That he might not beteene the windes of heaven
> Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and Earth
> Must I remember: Why she would hang on him,
> As if encrease of Appetite had growne
> By what it fed on; and yet within a month?
> Let me not think on't: Frailty, thy name is woman.
> A little Month, or ere those shooes were old
> With which she followed my poore Father's body
> Like Niobe, all teares. Why she, even she.
> (O Heaven! A beast that wants discourse of Reason
> Would have mourn'd longer) married with mine Uncle,
> My Father's Brother: but no more like my Father,
> Than I to Hercules. Within a Moneth?
> Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous Teares
> Had left the flushing of her gauled eyes,
> She married. O most wicked speed, to post
> With such dexterity to incestuous sheets:
> It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
> But breake my heart, for I must hold my tongue.
> (I, ii, 128-159)

As I read this passage, I seemed to sense that the italicized words Hiperion, Niobe, and Hercules called for deliberate movement from the actor portraying Hamlet. The dramatic purpose of the soliloquy is to let us see the cause of Hamlet's melancholy in relation to actions taking place prior to the time represented in the initial episodes of the

play. He had a mind given to reflection, a mind which beheld external things as hieroglyphics.[4] If there were tapestry in the background--and the Shakespearean audience familiar with the grandeur of Elizabeth's court would have seen tapestry as part of the setting for this scene whether real tapestries were evident on stage or not--Hamlet would have unconsciously responded to the hieroglyphics of the tapestry. In this case the punctuation of the soliloquy could be important, for the profusion of colons, semicolons, exclamation marks, and question marks might have indicated the actor's pauses as he dramatized a human mind unconsciously translating hieroglyphics into conscious allusions.

I think there is evidence that Hamlet was responding to the tapestry on the wall. The words, "How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable," suggest a tapestry association. Only in the best tapestries do the ribs and hatchings take away the dull, flat finish, and add a depth and purpose to the weaver's work. Shakespeare shows this same consciousness of tapestry texture a little later in the play when he has Claudius say, "You must not thinke that we are made of stuffe so flat and dull" (IV, vii, 30).

Hamlet's mind was preoccupied with thoughts of grief and with disgust at his mother's hasty marriage. As he thinks bitterly of recent events, three figures stand out in his mind--his father, his mother, and

his uncle. Emotionally he reviews the events but four times the tapestry hieroglyphics seem to intrude into his thinking. The first appears in the unconscious recognition of the tapestry texture, the others in the italicized allusions. An Elizabethan audience, guided by an appropriate gesture, would have had no difficulty in translating these allusions into familiar and well-known tapestry figures. The slaying of Niobe's children and the labours of Hercules were both popular tapestry themes. Specific data for tapestry collections in Queen Elizabeth's reign was difficult to find, but a list of the state collection belonging to Henry VIII included over sixty pieces of Hercules tapestry, and at least four Niobes.[5] Both must have been well-known in Elizabethan England. Hyperion and the satyr can also be identified as figures in well-known Renaissance tapestries.

In Renaissance tapestry a legend could be used as the thematic and narrative centre for a single piece of tapestry, or it might be the centre for several pieces which formed a set. Sometimes the legend was reduced to a small insert forming only part of the overall design. When this happened, several legends often were combined in a single panel as in the one which Eugene Müntz identifies by the following combination of legends.

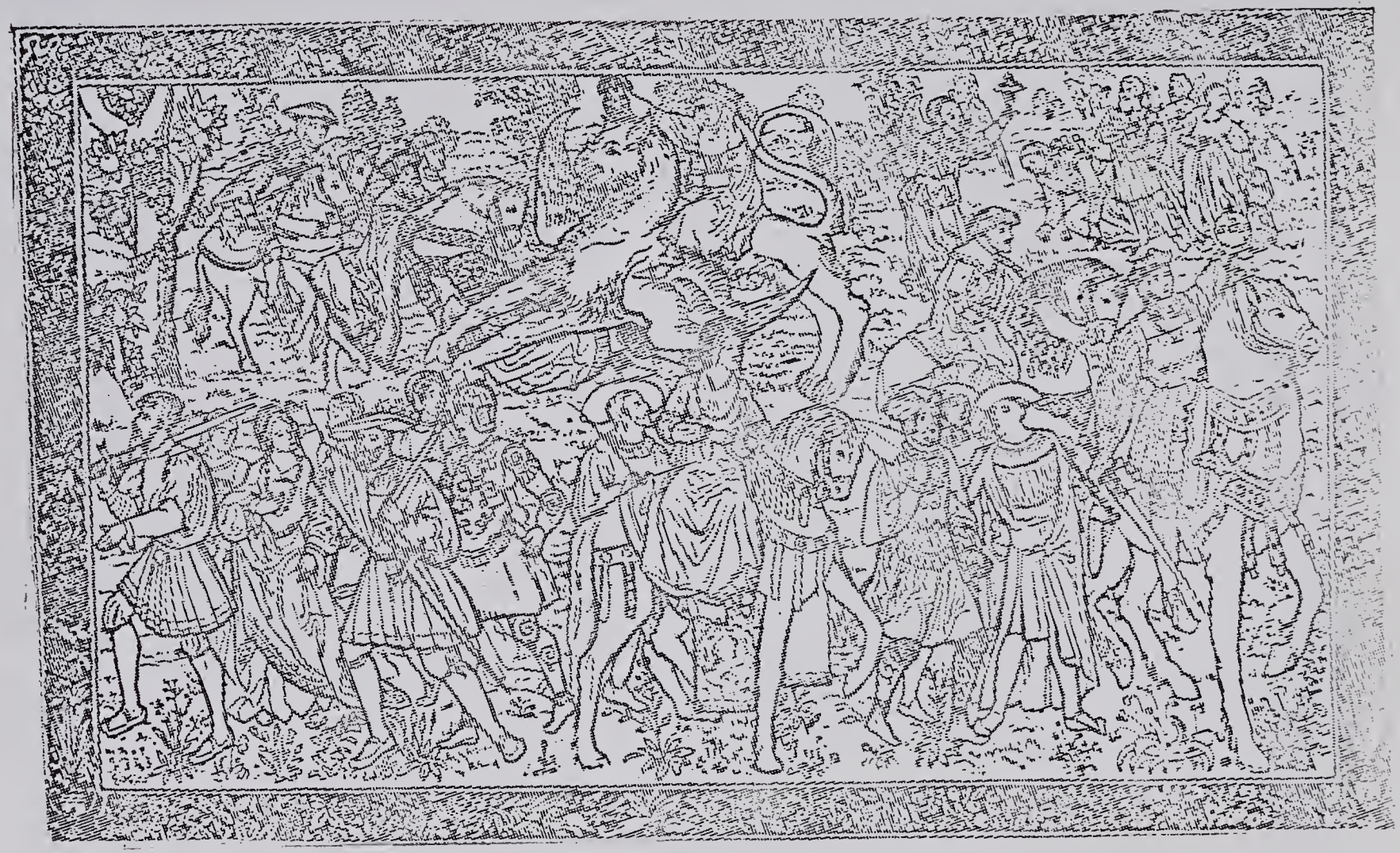
The three Graces dancing to the sound of Pan's pipe, Jupiter preparing to hurl his thunder, Cupid and Neptune interceding with Vulcan in favour of Mars and Neptune.[6]

The illustrations shown on pages 55, 56, and 57 suggest some of the possible tapestry combinations familiar to the Elizabethan public. There are many more. It is quite probable that Shakespeare did not consciously use any of these, since he was concerned mainly with the function of the arras. I suspect that his classical allusions came from a familiarity with Ovid, but because Hyperion, Niobe, and Hercules had also a tapestry association, they might have provided a visual clue for the tapestries of the Royal State Room.

Let us turn, now, from the first soliloquy to those incidents in the plot where we find the arras used as a piece of plot machinery. Here is the first one.

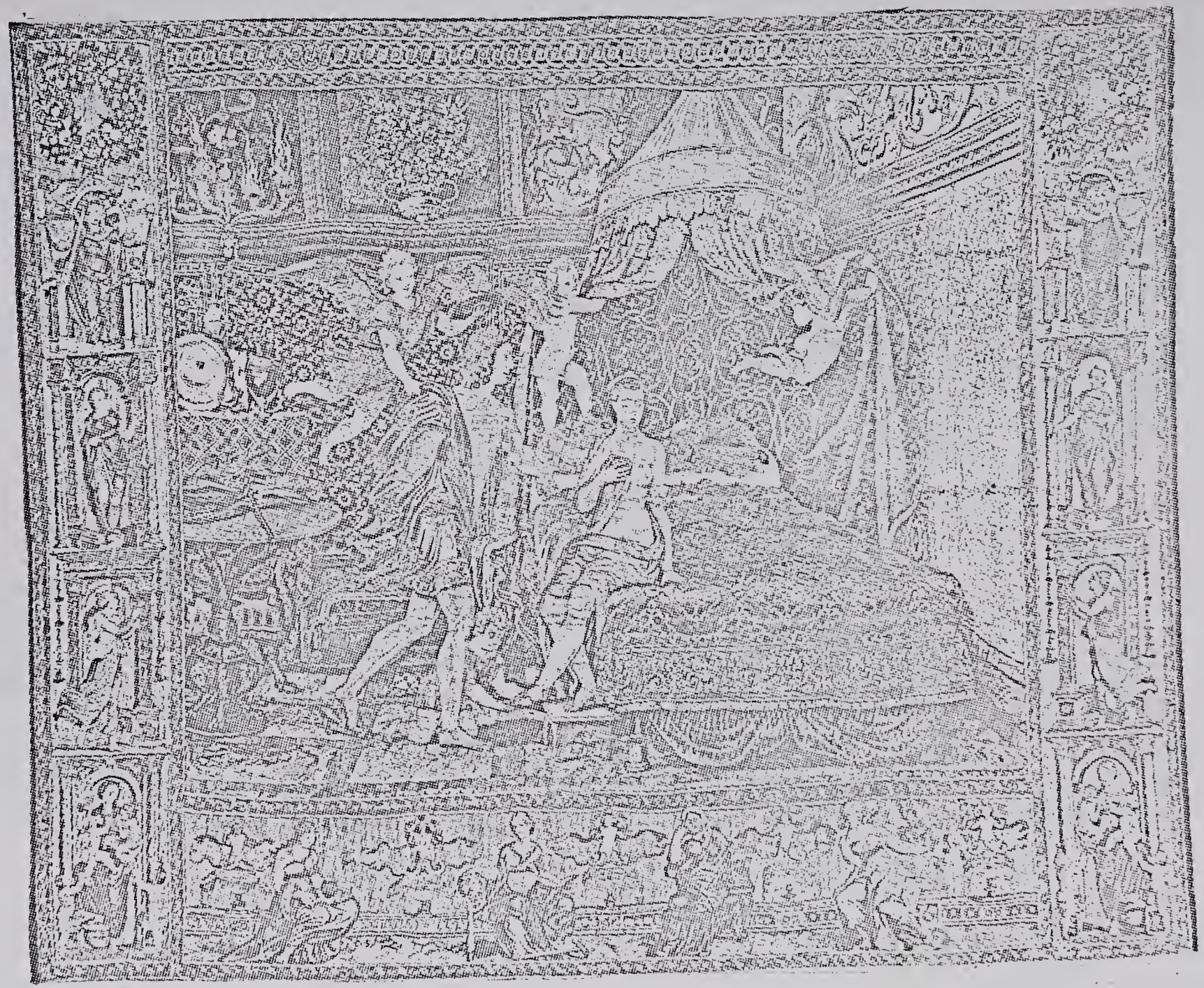
> King. How may we try it further?
> Pol. You know sometimes
> He walkes foure houres together, heere
> In the Lobby.
> Qu. So he ha' indeed.
> Pol. At such a time Ile loose my Daughter to him,
> Be you and I behinde an Arras then,
> Marke the encounter: If he love her not,
> And be not from his reason falne thereon;
> Let me be no Assistant for a State,
> And keepe a Farme and Carters.
> (II, ii, 160-168)

Shortly after Polonius made his suggestion to Claudius, the plan was put into execution, but not before Hamlet had had time to meet the actors and to lay the groundwork for his own little "mouse-trap." We all know what happened. The King was suspicious: "Madnesse in great Ones, must not unwatch'd go"; Polonius, confident that



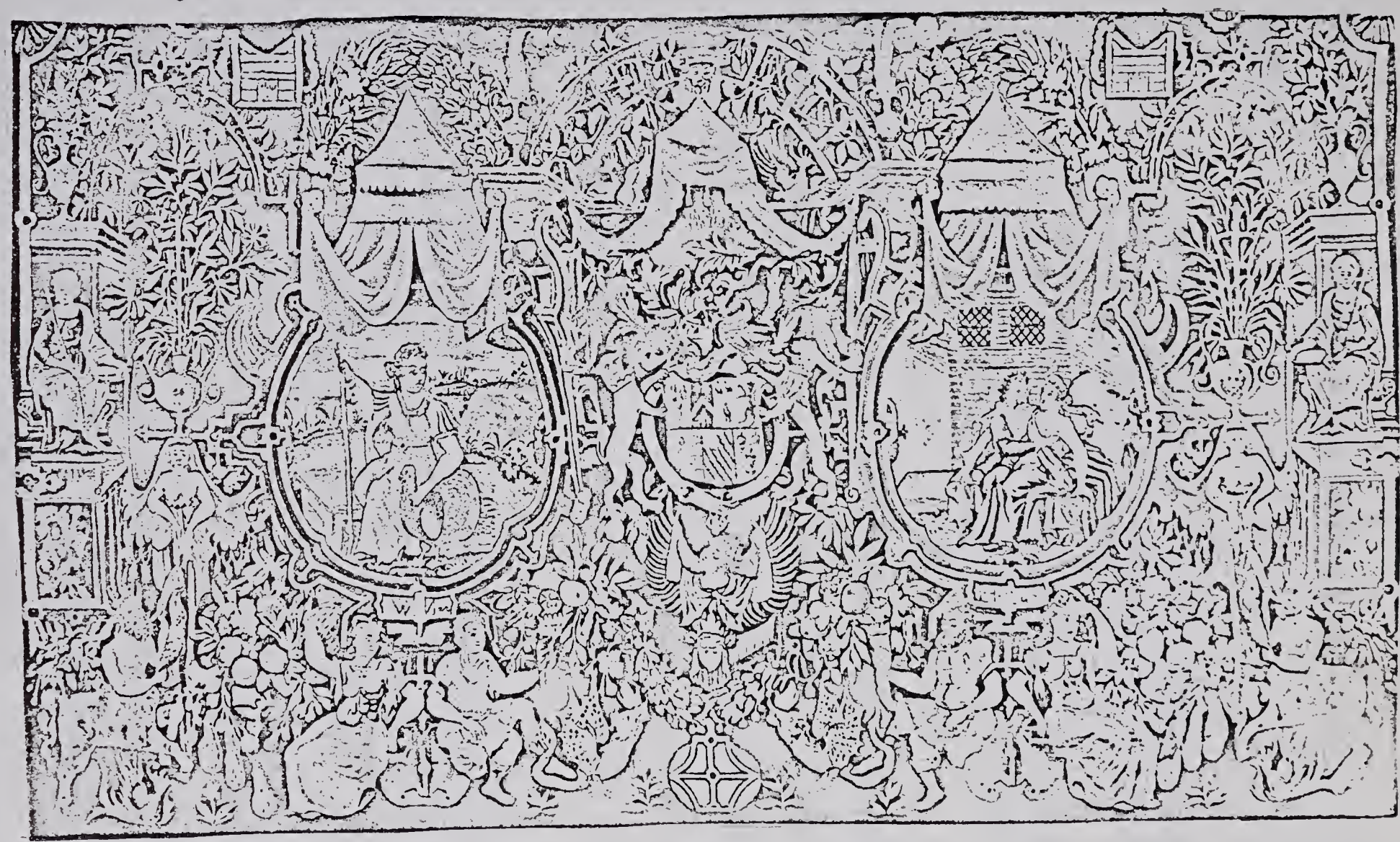
Historical and Allegorical Figures

A fifteenth century tapestry in Hampton Court Palace



The Bridal Chamber

From the Story of Mercury woven in Brussels about 1500



Armorials of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke

Woven by Sheldon Weavers in the late sixteenth century. In the Victoria and Albert Museum

they were on the right track in their attempt to interpret Hamlet's madness.

> How now Ophelia?
> You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet saide,
> We heard it all. My Lord, do as you please,
> But if you hold it fit after the Play
> Let his Queen Mother all alone intreat him
> To shew his Greefes: let her be round with him,
> And Ile be placed, so please you in the eare
> Of all their Conference.
> (III, i, 186-193)

And Polonius, because he played the spy, went to his death--killed by a sword thrust through the arras, a sword-thrust intended for Claudius. Do we detect here an echo of the legend surrounding Queen Elizabeth's last days when, after the execution of Essex, she gave way to morbidness and melancholy? Her godson, John Harrington, writes of her at this time:

> She disregarded every costly dish that cometh to the table and taketh little but manchet and succory pottage. Every new message from the City doth disturb her, and she frowns on all her ladies. . . . I must not say much even by this trusty and sure messenger; but the evil plots and designs have overcome all her Highness' sweet temper. She walks much in her chamber, and stamps her feet at ill news; and thrusts her rusty sword at times into the arras in great rage. . . . But the dangers are over, and yet she always has a sword by her table.[7]

There is a close parallel between the political intrigue which marked the closing years of Elizabeth's reign and the political intrigue which forms the centre of the Hamlet structure.

When we read the play for the first time, the arras seems to

be only an effective piece of plot machinery, but a closer examination will reveal within the structure of the play a number of arras extensions even more meaningful and more significant than those which we saw in Much Ado About Nothing or in Henry IV. The space behind the arras is associated with politics and snooping, and the human mind takes from the arras the property of hiding secrets behind its outward façade. Within this framework the arras itself becomes a significant symbol. This can be easily demonstrated for most of the major characters.

When Polonius set the stage for his little experiment, we saw Ophelia's actions become the "hanging" to cover up her father's scheming interference.

> Ophelia, walke you heere. Gracious so please ye
> We will bestow ourselves: Reade on this booke,
> That shew of such an exercise may colour
> Your lonelinesse. We are oft to blame in this,
> 'Tis too much prov'd, that with Devotions visage,
> And pious Action, we do surge o'er
> The divell himselfe.
> (III, i, 47-53)

The clues to a tapestry interpretation of this passage lie in the words "shew" and "colour." These point directly toward a tapestry, genuine or counterfeit, where a surface of colour and design hides the gloomy bareness of the walls beneath.

Claudius, who overheard what Polonius said to Ophelia, applied the comment to his own mind.

> Oh 'tis too true:
> How smart a lash that speech doth give my Conscience?
> The Harlot's Cheeke beautied with plast'ring Art
> Is not more ugly to the thing that helpes it,
> Then is my deede, to my most painted word.
> (III, i, 54-58)

The significance of this "painted word" image becomes even clearer when we see Claudius debating in the anguish of his own soul the fruits of the offence which he is hiding beneath the arras of his hypocrisy. The cosmetics covering the "harlot's cheek" borrow from the tapestry the function of covering the griminess of the walls behind it with an artificial ornamentation. The thematic clue which justifies associating the two artificial coverings becomes evident as we listen to the words of Polonius.

> My Lord, he's going to his Mother's Closset:
> Behinde the Arras Ile convey my selfe
> To heare the Processe. Ile warrant shee'l tax him home,
> And as you said, and wisely was it said,
> 'Tis meete that some more audience then a Mother,
> Since Nature makes them partiall, should o're-heare
> The speech of vantage. Fare you well my Liege,
> Ile call upon you ere you go to bed,
> And tell you what I know.
> (III, iii, 27-35)

The arras image, appearing here, reminds us of its function in the play. It points symbolically to Claudius' mind and to the arras of his hypocrisy. These words of Polonius are followed by the "prayer" scene containing Claudius' soliloquy and his analysis of the situation.

Then Ile looke up,
My fault is past. But oh, what forme of Prayer
Can serve my turne? Forgive me my foule Murther.
That cannot be, since I am still possest
Of those effects for which I did the Murther.
My Crowne, mine owne Ambition, and my Queene:
May one be pardon'd, and retaine th' offence?
In the corrupted currants of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by Justice,
And oft 'tis seene, the wicked prize itselfe
Buyes out the Law; but 'tis not so above,
There is no shuffling, there the Action lyes
In his true Nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence.
(III, iii, 50-64)

The immediate metaphor which Shakespeare employs here is not the "arras" image; it is a metaphor of corruption, buying and selling. But notice how the arras and its hidden space undergirds the actual metaphor used. The effects for which the murder was done are analogous with the grime on the walls; and the gilded hand of offence shoving by justice in the corrupted currents of the world reminds us that a draft in the corridor between the arras and the wall can cause the hanging to move. Likewise, a person standing behind the arras and accidentally touching it can cause a ripple on the surface. In a very real sense this tapestry association points forward to the next scene and to the cause of Polonius' death.

There are images apparent in the arras scenes which recur significantly in other scenes and which are part of the unity of the plot structure. As an illustration let us examine the scene in which

Claudius sets up the duel with Hamlet. Laertes' situation was directly parallel to the situation in which Hamlet found himself at the beginning of the play. But Claudius was able to play on the emotions of Laertes as he had not been able to play on those of Hamlet.

> Laertes was your Father deare to you?
> Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
> A face without a heart?
> (IV, vii, 108-110)

The reference to a "painting of sorrow" could not in itself be classed as a tapestry allusion, but it points back to an earlier use of the same metaphor, also by Claudius--"Than is my deed to my most painted word." When we recall the implications of treachery and intrigue which surrounded its use at that time, we realize that the same motives of intrigue and treachery control the actions of Claudius in this situation.

The same image that took us back to the actions and words of Claudius, takes us forward to the words of Hamlet: "By the image of my cause, I see the portraiture of his." (V, ii, 77-78), and this in turn points to the final scene of the play where the "revenge" motif combines with the "justice" motif. Through the "painting" image there is a double emphasis on the parallel existing between the situation of Laertes and the situation of Hamlet. One emphasis points to Claudius and the other to Hamlet, and both of these men were hiding their real actions behind a mental arras. I cannot help but wonder

also if Claudius' words carry an unconscious reference to the tapestry showing Niobe weeping for her children. If so, then these words provide additional evidence suggesting the state-room tapestry.

But the "painting" image is not the only reflexive clue in the scene between Claudius and Laertes. The words "To cut his throat in the church" remind us of the opportunity Hamlet had missed. A third clue occurs a few speeches later when Claudius says:

> He being remisse,
> Most generous, and free from all contriving,
> Will not peruse the Foiles? So that with ease,
> Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
> A Sword unbaited, and in a passe of practice,
> Requit him for your Father.
> (IV, vii, 128-133)

I do not think that Claudius consciously used the word "shuffling." But it, more than anything else, takes us back to the arras and to the implications within the prayer scene. The difference between divine justice where no "shuffling" can take place, and the justice of Claudius' court where he himself is willing to sanction the "shuffling" of the swords serves to emphasize the arras of intrigue which has clothed the principal action of the plot. It is as if we had been allowed to peek through one of the slits in this arras and to see what was taking place in the space behind it.

To trace the arras which cloaked Hamlet's mind we need to move back to the initial scenes of the play.

> Seemes Madam? Nay it is: I know not Seemes:
> 'Tis not alone my Inky Cloake (good Mother)
> Nor Customary suites of solemne Blacke,
> Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
> No, nor the fruitfull River in the Eye,
> Nor the dejected haviour of the Visage,
> Together with all Formes, Moodes, shewes of Griefe,
> That can denote me truly. These indeed Seeme,
> For they are actions that a man might play:
> But I have that Within, which passeth show;
> These, but the Trappings, and the Suites of woe.
> (I, ii, 77-86)

Claudius provides the first clue which might link this scene with tapestry. True it is an indirect clue, but then it would have to be because the tapestry motif has not yet been introduced.

> But now my Cosin Hamlet, and my Sonne?. . .
> How is it that the Clouds still hang on you?
> (I, ii, 64-66)

This question, in a very dramatic manner, draws our attention to Hamlet and sets off his heavy black mourning in contrast to the regal gaiety of other persons on stage. But by the use of the word "hang" it focuses attention on the background stage settings as well as on Hamlet's attire. The opening remarks of Claudius would make it quite clear to an Elizabethan audience that they were witnessing a meeting of the Privy Council in an official "state-room" of the palace. Such an audience would recognize that the black draperies, the emblematic acknowledgment of official mourning must have been replaced by conventional wall decorations. A royal wedding would never have been celebrated in state black. Claudius' reference to "wisest sorrow"

and to "our sometime sister" would make this implication quite clear to the audience even though no stage tapestry were hanging in the background. It is only on Hamlet that "the clouds still hang."

Hamlet picked up the implication in his uncle's question--"Not so my lord, I am too much in the sun." There is a double meaning in the word "sun" which, here, is more significant than a simple pun on words. Already an arras is evident in the undercurrent which marks the exchange between Hamlet and Claudius. Just as a tapestry was merely a part of the furniture or "trappings" of a room, so for Hamlet the customary suits of solemn black, the sighs, the tears, the dejection, and all other forms, moods, or shapes of grief are merely "trappings" and "suits of woe," superficial coverings hiding the emotion buried beneath.

The emotional arras which Hamlet has set up becomes even more significant when he meets the ghost.

> Be thou a Spirit of health or Goblin damn'd,
> Bring with thee ayres from Heaven, or blasts from Hell,
> Be thy events wicked or charitable,
> Thou comst in such a questionable shape
> That I will speak to thee.
> (I, iv, 21-25)

and learns from him:

> The Serpent that did sting thy Father's life
> Now weares his Crowne.
> (I, v, 41-42)

It is then that he decides to "put an antic disposition on," in order to gain time and to resolve his uncertainty.

> The Spirit that I have seene
> May be the Divell, and the Divel hath power
> T'assume a pleasing shape, yea and perhaps
> Out of my Weaknesse, and my Melancholly,
> As he is very potent with such Spirits,
> Abuses me to damne me. Ile have grounds
> More Relative than this: The Play's the thing
> Wherein Ile catch the Conscience of the King.
> (II, ii, 620-627)

The word "conscience" carries us forward to the next scene, to the arras behind which Claudius is hiding, and to the speech in which Claudius' conscience becomes an arras extension.

In the first scene Hamlet had compared his mother to Niobe, his father to Hyperion. Through Leto we can find a link between the legends of Hyperion and Niobe, for it was Niobe's boastful pride which offended Leto and led to the slaying of the children. According to the legend it was Apollo who killed the children (~~another name for Hyperion~~). In Hamlet's comparison of his mother to Niobe we see a reversal which lies deeply buried in his subconscious mind. At the root of this was a feeling that in some way Gertrude had been responsible for her husband's death. It was this subconscious antagonism which led the ghost to caution Hamlet:

> Taint not thy mind; nor let thy Soule contrive
> Against thy Mother ought; leave her to heaven,
> And to those Thorns that in her bosome lodge,
> To pricke and sting her.
> (I, v, 85-88)

But Hamlet disregarded this warning, and because he disregarded it the ghost appeared to him a second time.

> Do not forget: this Visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
> But looke, Amazement on thy Mother sits;
> O step betweene her and her fighting Soule,
> Conceit in weakest bodies, strongest workes.
> Speake to her Hamlet.
> (III, iv, 108-113)

These words, coming so soon after the episode in which the arras itself was such an important piece of plot machinery, point to an arras extension. In effect, the ghost has asked Hamlet to become an arras to protect his mother against her "fighting soul."

Gertrude did not see the ghost, but when Hamlet said to him,

> Do not looke upon me,
> Least with this pitteous action you convert
> My sterne effects: then what I have to do,
> Will want true colour; teares perchance for bloode.
> (III, iv, 123-129)

the audience would be reminded of Niobe's tears which had wanted "true colour"--tears which to her son, at least, were but part of the trappings of woe. The word "colour" points back to the "trappings" of woe, thus linking the tapestry of this scene with the tapestry implications in the first scene. Nor is this the only link between the

two scenes. Hamlet says to his mother:

> Looke heere upon this Picture, and on this,
> The counterfeit presentment of two Brothers:
> See what a grace was seated on his Brow,
> Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himselfe,
> An eye like Mars, to threaten or command
> A station like the Herald Mercurie
> New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.
> (III, iv, 54-60)

The italics in Hyperion remind us of the italics which marked the tapestry figures in the first soliloquy, suggesting a direct link between the stage tapestry of this scene and the implied tapestry of the first scene. And again the gestures of the actor would be a significant guide to audience interpretation.

From the point in this scene where the ghost suggests that Hamlet become an arras to protect his mother from the effects of her own conscience, we move forward to the scene where Gertrude reports to Claudius the incident of Polonius' death.

> Mad as the Seas, and winde, when both contend
> Which is the Mightier. In his lawlesse fit
> Behinde the Arras, hearing something stirre,
> He whips his Rapier out, and cries a Rat, a Rat,
> And in his brainish apprehension killes
> The unseen good old man.
> (IV, i, 8-13)

As we listen, we recognize that for Gertrude mother-love has become an arras. But before this happened, Hamlet had stepped out from behind the arras of his uncertainty, and after the death of Polonius had shown himself in his true colours.

> That I essentially am not in madnesse,
> But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know.
> (III, iv, 187-188)

One of the early Quarto editions of Hamlet reveals this aspect of Hamlet's attitude even more plainly.

> There's letters sealed, and my two school-fellows,
> Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
> They bear the mandate. They must sweep my way,
> And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
> For 'tis the sport to have the enginer,
> Hoist with his own petar; and 't shall go hard
> But I will delve one yard below their mines,
> And blow them at the moon. O 'tis most sweet
> When in one line two crafts directly meet.[8]
> (III, iv, 202-210)

After killing Polonius, Hamlet openly accepted the responsibility of his actions. "For this same Lord I do repent. . .and will answer well the death I gave him." Through Gertrude he sent a warning to Claudius, but Gertrude did not deliver the message. She took refuge in mother love, and the battle of wits between Hamlet and Claudius continued until it ended with the death of both and the establishment of a new political regime.

John Draper has read Hamlet as a drama of political intrigue in an age when "nonchalant and nondescript violence" was being replaced by a diplomacy which could sanction "questioning motives, testing proofs, and waiting opportunity." He sees in the plot development:

not the struggle of an individual will against its own weakness, but rather the slow maturing efforts of one who against his own will must bide his time, of one who will not strike without due evidence, and who is too shrewd to risk his all upon dubious occasion.[9]

Shakespeare, conscious of the relationship between the arras and the wall behind it, adorned the walls of his Danish castle with conventional tapestry, and then he used that tapestry and its poetic extensions to probe the dangers which secrecy and intrigue can bring to a nation if the line of succession is uncertain. So conscious was he of the arras and its function that the implications growing out of this consciousness permeate the whole structure of the play. Two things seem to me significant. First, there are the political implications where the area between the arras and the wall becomes a symbol of espionage and the arras itself becomes a covering to hide intrigue and politics. Second, and even more interesting than the first are the implications surrounding the theatrical functions of the arras. The area behind the arras was a hiding place, but it was something more, for when Shakespeare placed Polonius behind the arras he was, quite literally, placing him in an area which was neither on stage nor off stage.

CHAPTER V

TAPESTRY, THE TROJAN MATERIAL, AND SHAKESPEARE

Thematically Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida are related, although the basic materials used in each are quite different. Both are concerned with changing conditions, but where Hamlet explores the effects of intrigue Troilus and Cressida explores changing ideologies. The world of Hamlet is a world filled with arrases covering the hidden spaces of the mind; a world where men concealed their inmost thoughts and emotions and revealed only the façade they wanted seen. The arras forms the structural centre of the Hamlet probe. In Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare does not repeat the arras motif, but it would be surprising if there were not some evidence of tapestry awareness in a play which must have been written at almost the same time that he was working on Hamlet. This time, however, since we will be dealing with material which the tapissier used long before Shakespeare used it, we need to understand what the tapissier did with that material and why he was interested in it, before we try to discover what effect the tapestry treatment might possibly have had on Shakespeare's work.

Interest in Trojan material began with a national association with the legends of ancient Greece and Rome. "At the end of the fourteenth century and at the beginning of the fifteenth," writes Johan Huizinga, in his Waning of the Middle Ages, "the political stage of the kingdoms of Europe were so crowded with fierce and tragic conflicts that the peoples could not help seeing all that regards royalty as a succession of sanguinary and romantic events."[1] Not only Italy, the legendary home of Aeneas, but England and France too, traced their royal lineage back to Trojan origin. William Forsythe writes:

> The fall of Troy was closely associated by the French with their own history. As early as the seventh century, when history was clothed with romance, the chronicles of Fredigarius told of Francio, a leader of the Trojans, who, after the sack of the city, supposedly came as far as France, which was named in his honour. The Trojan wanderers were said to have founded a number of cities, including Paris, named after the princely lover of Helen; Troyes, the new Troy; Rheims, founded by Remus, son-in-law of Hector; and Tours named for Turnus.[2]

In England this sense of ancestor worship was just as strong as it was in France, and it kept alive the romance of chivalry long past the days of feudalism. The significance of the movement can be appreciated if we look at the words of Johan Huizinga.

> The quest of glory and honour goes hand in hand with a hero-worship which also might seem to announce the Renaissance. The somewhat factitious revival of the splendour of chivalry that we find everywhere in European courts after 1300 is already connected with the Renaissance by a real link. It is a naive prelude to it. In reviving chivalry the poets and princes imagined that they were returning to antiquity. In the minds of the fourteenth century, a vision of antiquity had hardly yet disengaged itself from the fairy-land sphere of the Round Table. Classical heroes were still tinged with the general colour of romance.

On one hand, the figure of Alexander had long ago entered the sphere of chivalry; on the other, chivalry was supposed to be of Roman origin. "And he maintained the discipline of chivalry well, as did the Romans formerly," thus a Burgundian chronicler praised Henry V of England. The blazons of Caesar, of Hercules, and of Troilus, are placed in a fantasy of King René, side by side with those of Arthur and Lancelot. Certain coincidences of terminology played a part in tracing back the origin of chivalry to Roman antiquity. How could people have known that the word miles with the Roman authors did not mean a miles in the sense of mediæval Latin, that is to say, a knight; or that a Roman eques differed from a feudal knight? Consequently, Romulus, because he raised a band of a thousand mounted warriors, was taken to be the founder of chivalry.[3]

Even Queen Elizabeth, usually so realistic and practical, succumbed to the influence of the movement and had quartered on one version of her official coat of arms, the arms of a mythical Trojan.

The story of Troy had a meaning for the Elizabethans that it lacks today, but that meaning was part of their heritage from the Middle Ages when poet and tapissier alike, for the glorification of their own country, kept alive the legends of Troy and Greece. Leland Hunter describes a tapestry which was possibly part of a set commissioned by Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, in honour of the English Princess who was to become his bride. It was a tapestry commemorating the story of Brutus, the legendary hero of Britain.

A splendid tapestry in the style of the great Trojan War group, is the one at Saragossa, 12 feet high by 26 feet long, picturing the story of Brutus. . . . Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, is a romantic hero developed in the Middle Ages, from whom Britain is supposed to get its name. Brutus, having killed his father while hunting, was forced to leave Italy for Greece where he found Priam's son Helenus and other Trojans who had been made captives by Achilles' son Pyrrhus. Brutus organized a revolt against the King of the Greeks, Pandrasus,

defeated him and made him prisoner. Here the tapestry begins. After marrying ignoge daughter of pandrasus, brutus says good-bye to his father-in-law who stands on the shore, and sails forth with the Trojans in search of a new home. Above this scene, to the right, on a deserted island is the altar of Diana (diana) whose oracle told Brutus that he was destined to found a new Troy on a distant island, where the sun sets. Sailing west past Gibraltar, Brutus lands in Aquitane and defeats King Gopharius. The battle is vividly portrayed. Here the tapestry ends. Brutus then sailed to Albion, and on the bank of the Thames founded a new Troy, the name of which in the reign of Lud who fought Julius Caesar, was changed to Ludton (London).[4]

Of all the tapestries built around the Trojan material, the most famous was a set woven at the Grenier workshops in Tournai, probably between 1472 and 1474. This set, like the Brutus set, was originally made at the request of Charles the Bold. It consisted of twelve tapestries, each piece fifteen and one-half feet high by thirty-one feet long. At the top and bottom were inscriptions in French and Latin Gothic respectively. These inscriptions provided a running commentary on the tapestry narrative and covered the events of the Trojan story from the initial meeting between Helen and Paris to the final fall of Troy. More than one complete series was woven from the original cartoon, and single tapestries were sometimes distributed to individual buyers. The Trojan War tapestries were well-known in Elizabethan England; the Tournai set was not the only design woven. The subject was a popular one and many artists and tapissiers used it as a theme.

In most of these tapestries, unless one happened to glance at the names of the characters on the tapestry, one would never suspect

that Greek and Trojan warriors were represented. The classical heroes became medieval knights decked with all the splendour and pageantry which marked a jousting fête or a tournament. This pageantry, the armourial bearings, and the rich costumes marked the participants as medieval; but at the same time the script identified the story. In the light of the story facial expressions, gestures of the hand, and other movements of the body became significant. The use to which this type of tapestry was put is self-evident--to review for the spectator a story with which he was already familiar and to identify the story with current history.

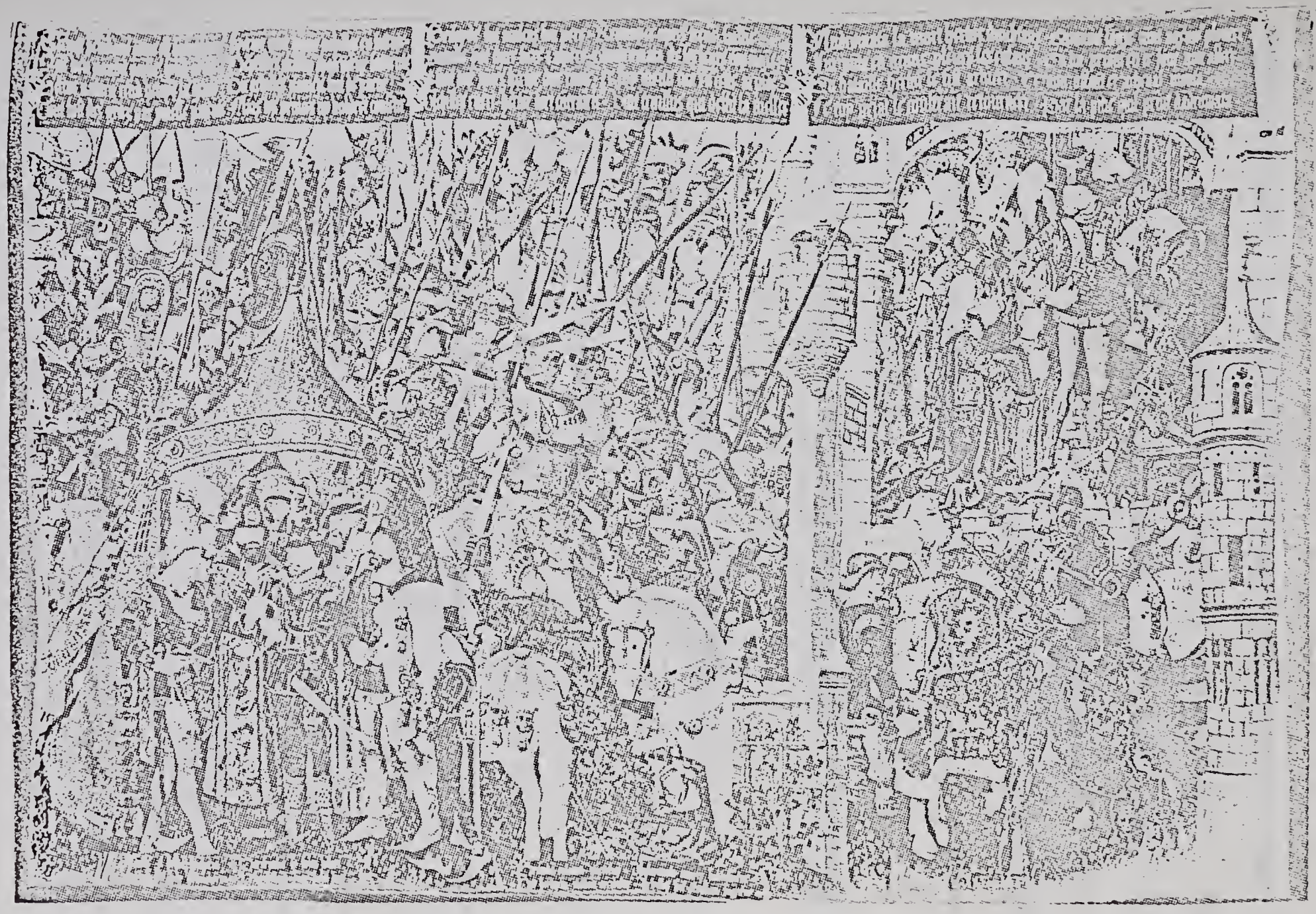
An analysis of the Tournai set would be interesting, but unfortunately space will not permit us to deal with all twelve pieces. Let us, instead, concentrate on the sixth piece of the set. I choose this piece because it is built around material which Shakespeare also uses. As we approach the study, let us keep in mind that if we find similarity in treatment it is because Shakespeare and the tapissier cartoonist both had access to the same material. Most scholars agree that Shakespeare's source was Caxton or Lydgate. But both Caxton and Lydgate had access to the French source, Benoit de Sainte-More and it was his version of the story which formed the root for the French cartoonist. It is not my purpose to suggest that Shakespeare drew his story from existing tapestries. It is inconceivable,

however, to think that he was unfamiliar with the Trojan tapestries. There were too many of them in England for him not to have known at least some of them.

The sixth piece of the Tournai set features four main areas of action. The first and third centre around fighting, the second shows the meeting in Achilles' tent, and the fourth shows Hector preparing for battle. Since we do not have the actual tapestry to look at, let us begin by noting William Forsythe's description of the meeting between Hector and Achilles (the second incident of the Tournai tapestry).

> Hector, at the right, dominates the group--Hector, "Flower of manhood, ground of chivalrie, so huge made, so wel growe on lengthe, there was never man that fully myght attayne to the prowes of this worthie knyght, of alle good I fynde he was the bests." In the centre is Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, shorter than Hector, but still, "large, noble, eloquent, prudent." Behind Hector is a fragmentary figure, Memelaus, the aggrieved husband of Helen and the brother of Agamemnon. --- On the left is Achilles, "blond, great-chested, with large and mighty limbs and well-curled hair, most fierce in battle," who had, "no pareyll ne like to hym amonge alle the Grekes."[5]

Achilles is seen in this panel in an almost favourable light, but the public were familiar with his treachery and that familiarity coloured their reaction to Achilles. Even here where he is represented as meeting Hector on a friendly basis, the pro-Trojan bias becomes evident. There are contrasts between Hector and Achilles which can be seen even in a black and white photographic reproduction. Hector, standing erect with his weight confidently balanced on both feet, is shown



An Almost Complete Trojan War Tapestry

The sixth piece of a set that was woven in the Grenier workshops at Tournai in 1546. At the left is a part of the fifth battle, next is the tent scene. In the centre is the eighth battle and on the right the arming of Hector. This tapestry is preserved to-day in the cathedral at Zamora.

beside Achilles who stands with one foot insolently thrust ahead of the other. Both men appear to be gesturing with their hands. These gestures are probably an unconscious part of the conversation but they provide part of the contrast between the two figures. Hector seems to be the speaker and his fingers, pointing animatedly, give the impression of emphasizing what he is saying. That his hands are important is evident because the eyes of Agamemnon, Menelaus, and the other figures in the background appear to be looking at them.

Achilles' attitude, unlike that of the other spectators, demonstrates controlled aggressiveness. His hands speak as eloquently as Hector's do. One is bent forward at hip level, the other is chest high. But in the bend of the arm and the angle at which the fingers are extended is something that suggests arrogant pride. A further effect of contrast is seen in the placing of the figures. We know that Achilles is tall, but Hector is shown in the foreground, making him look even taller than Achilles. His features reflect a dignity and seriousness that stand in contrast to the aggressive attitude suggested by the forward thrust of Achilles' chin. Part of the contrast is accented by showing Hector with moustache and beard, Achilles as clean-shaven.. In tapestry these contrasts would be emphasized, not only by ribs and hatchings but also by the high-lights of well-placed slits--an

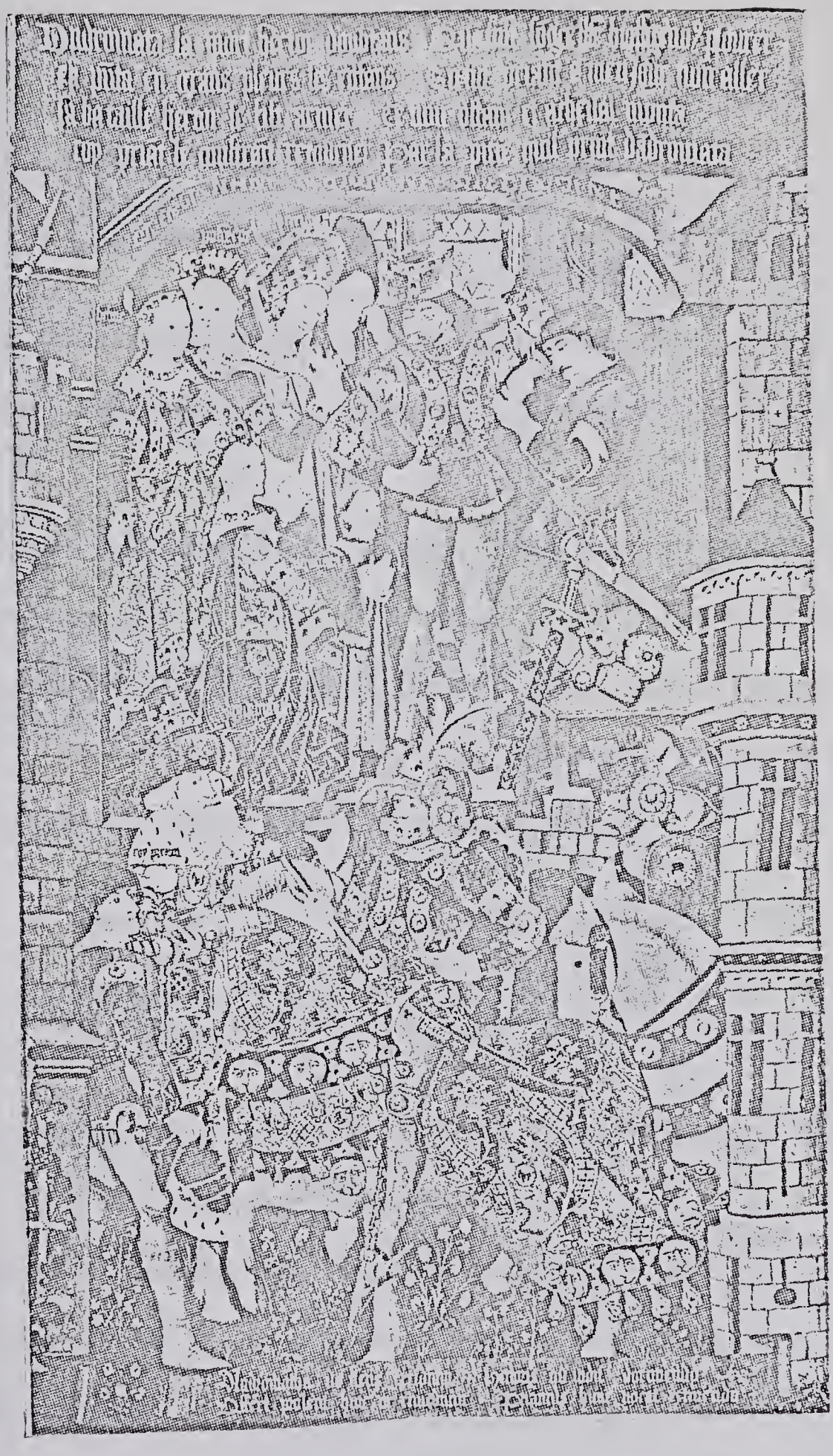
emphasis which cannot show up in a simple black and white illustration. I suspect that in tapestry texture, this panel would give an impressive effect of the contrast between Hector and Achilles.

Shakespeare makes use of the same incident and captures something of the same feelings: - the contrast, the insolence of Achilles, and the confidence of both men.

Ulys. So to him we leave it.
Most gentle, and most valiant Hector, welcome;
After the Generall, I beseech you next
To Feast with me, and see me at my Tent.
Achil. I shall forestall thee Lord Ulysses, thou:
Now Hector I have fed mine eyes on thee,
I have with exact view perused thee Hector,
And quoted joynt by joynt.
Hect. Is this Achilles?
Achil. I am Achilles.
Hect. Stand faire I prythee, let me looke on thee.
Achil. Behold thy fill.
Hect. Nay, I have done already.
Achil. Thou art too breefe, I will the second time,
As I would buy thee, view thee limbe by limbe.
Hect. O like a Booke of sport thou'lt read me ore:
But there's more in me then thou understand'st.
Why doest thou so oppresse me with thine eye:
Achil. Tell me you Heavens, in which part of his body
Shall I destroy him? Whether there, or there, or there,
That I may give the local wound a name,
And make distinct the very breach, where-out
Hector's great spirit flew. Answer me heavens.
Hect. It would discredit the blest Gods, proud man,
To answer such a question: Stand againe;
Think'st thou to catch my life so pleasantly
As to prenominate in nice conjecture
Where thou wilt hit me dead?
Achil. I tell thee yea.

Hect. Wert thou the Oracle to tell me so,
I'd not beleeve thee: henceforth guard thee well,
For Ile not kill thee there, nor there, nor there,
But by the forge that stithied Mars his helme,
Ile kill thee everywhere, yea, ore and ore.
You wisest Grecians, pardon me this bragge,
His insolence drawes folly from my lips,
But Ile endeavour deeds to match these words,
Or may I never -
Ajax. Do not chafe thee Cosin:
And you Achilles, let these threats alone
Till accident, or purpose bring you too't.
You may every day enough of Hector
If you have stomacke. The generall state I fear,
Can scarce intreat you to be odd with him.
Hect. I pray you let us see you in the field,
We have had pelting Warres since you refus'd
The Grecians cause.
Achil. Dost thou intreat me Hector?
Tomorrow do I meet thee fell as death
To-night, all Friends.
Hect. Thy hand upon that match.
(IV, v, 228-278)

The fourth incident of the tapestry panel Shakespeare also treated. In the panel the tapissier uses two scenes to show Hector being armed for battle. The first pictures Andromache with her two children kneeling before her husband and begging him not to go into battle. Shakespeare's reproduction of this incident in Act V of Troilus and Cressida does not include the children. It uses Cassandra instead. The reason for the change is an obvious one, governed by theatre technique. The appearance of Cassandra reminds the audience of the implications of her first dramatic entrance.



The Arming of Hector

A part of the sixth piece of the Trojan War set woven at Tournai. Owned today by the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

> Cry Troyans cry, practise your eyes with teares,
> Troy must not be, nor goodly Illion stand,
> Our fire-brand Brother Paris burns us all.
> Cry, Troyans cry, a Helen and a woe;
> Cry, cry, Troy burnes, or else let Helen goe.
> (II, ii, 106-110)

Her words added to the tenseness of the situation, and by doing this they stressed the futility of the cause for which the Trojans were fighting.

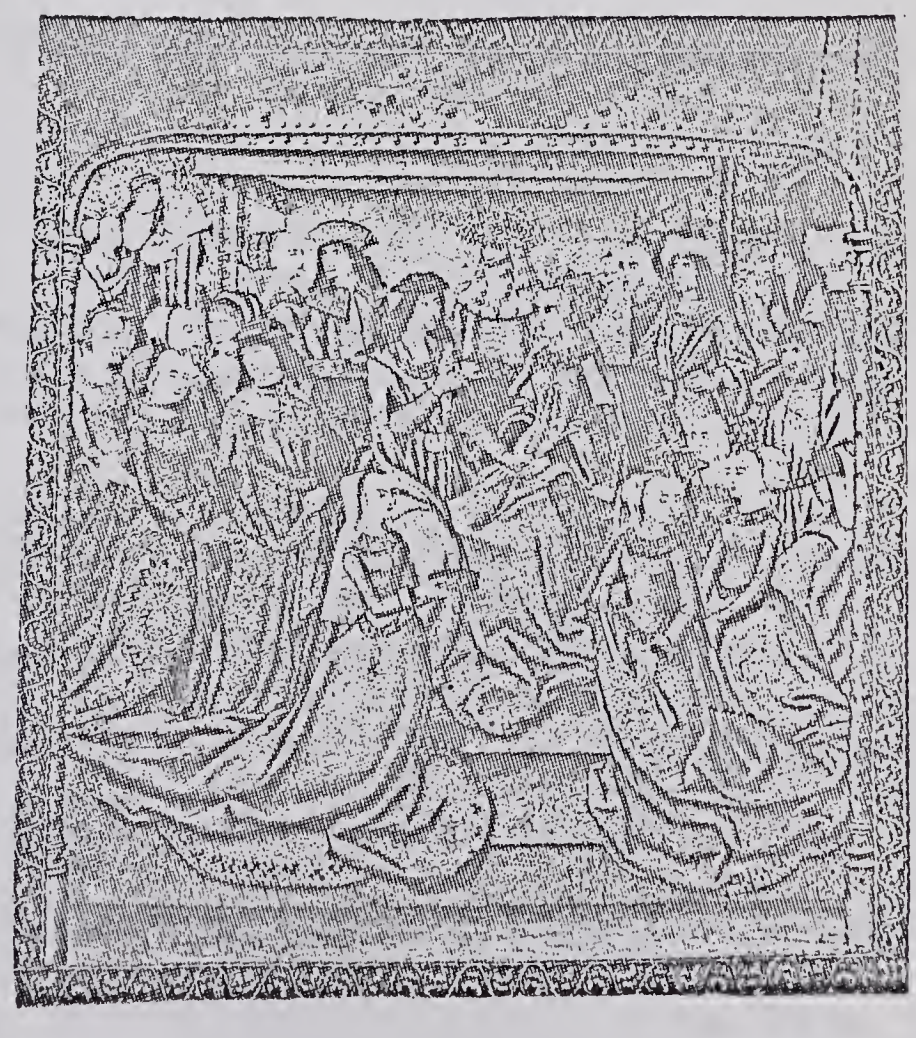
The second scene in this section of the panel shows Hector fully armed, mounted and ready for battle. Priam stands in front of him, his left hand raised to detain his son. This part of the incident Shakespeare also uses. Again with a slight change. Priam forbids Hector and Hector in turn pleads with his father:

> I must not break my faith:
> You know me dutifull, therefore deare sir,
> Let me not shame respect; but give me leave
> To take that course by your consent and voice,
> Which you doe here forbid me, Royall Priam.
> (V, iii, 74-78)

As a result he goes forth into battle with Priam's blessing. "Farewell: the gods with safetie stand about thee."

These scenes show how closely Shakespeare followed his source material. Let me repeat again that when Shakespeare used the Trojan material I do not think he was consciously influenced by any existing tapestry. Tapestry was only a part of the medium which had helped to build a tradition around the Trojan material. Shakes-

This tapestry and the one below are two out of a set of four tapestries that picture the story of Paris and Helen. The tapestry at the left pictures the story of Ulysses and Diomedes at the court of Priam.



The tapestry at the right pictures the marriage of Paris and Helen. These tapestries are the property of the Buveen Brothers in Paris.

peare found a ready-made source with which public opinion was so familiar that he had to use the material as he found it, making only minor re-grouping for theatrical effects, or telescoping events for dramatic purposes. This did not mean, however, that the story could not become a probe for contemporary life. Herein lies Shakespeare's originality.

I think we can see in what Shakespeare does with the Trojan material how he was influenced, unconsciously, by the way in which the tapissier handled the same material. The tapissier depended upon a running commentary to tell his story. Leland Hunter gives us a translation of the French Gothic verse above the Hector and Andromache panel.

> Andromache fearing the death of Hector that in her dreams she had bewailed upon her knees, and with great lamentation brought her children and besought him not to go out on that day. Despite which Hector had himself armed for battle, and mounted his horse. King Priam made him turn back, because of the pity he felt for Andromache.[6]

The tapestry gives us a static picture, an illustration of the incident caught at a moment when time is arrested and action held there. At best, tapestry can give us only a series of these illustrations ranged in consecutive order so they grow into a running narrative. They are most effective when the narrative has a familiar background, for then they become meaningful. The dramatic presentation, on the other hand, shows, not the arrested action, but the action in progress,

clothed with motivating complications and leading on to new action. It shows the human mind at work as opposed to the arrested moment caught in tapestry.

Shakespeare made effective use of these two methods of narration when he set up his contrasting pictures of the two camps. The action in the Greek camp is presented through a type of metatheatre where director, actor and spectator are all assigned roles in the drama, and where the principles of the device are emphasized by the "play within the play" technique. Agamemnon is commander-in-chief of the Greek army but he is only a figurehead; a puppet in the hands of Ulysses who devotes all his energy to manipulating the Greek army, and to forcing them into a position where they will have to push forward for the total destruction of Troy. He is a wily politician and Achilles, Ajax, and the other leaders merely become puppets in his little play.

The actor-acting device is not part of the technique used to present the Trojan camp. It is almost as if Shakespeare had deliberately emphasized the contrast between the two camps by presenting them through contrasting techniques. The characters of the Greek camp were living people with their actions motivated by pettiness, jealousy, and other living human emotions. The only character who emerges from the Trojan camp as a living character is Troilus and

this, I believe, is not because of his position in the Trojan camp but because he is the principal character in the "Cressida" story. The other members of the Trojan camp seem to have been conceived as mere representations of the parts assigned them by tradition. Consequently they act like static figures motivated by a will-o'-the-wisp ideology. Their grouping and presentation give one the feeling of an animated tapestry cartoon where the characters have suddenly come to life so that we can listen to the actual words of the dialogue taking place within the environment of the tapestry framework. How effective this treatment is as a theatre device has already been demonstrated in the passages we studied when comparing scenes from existing tapestries with corresponding scenes from Shakespeare.

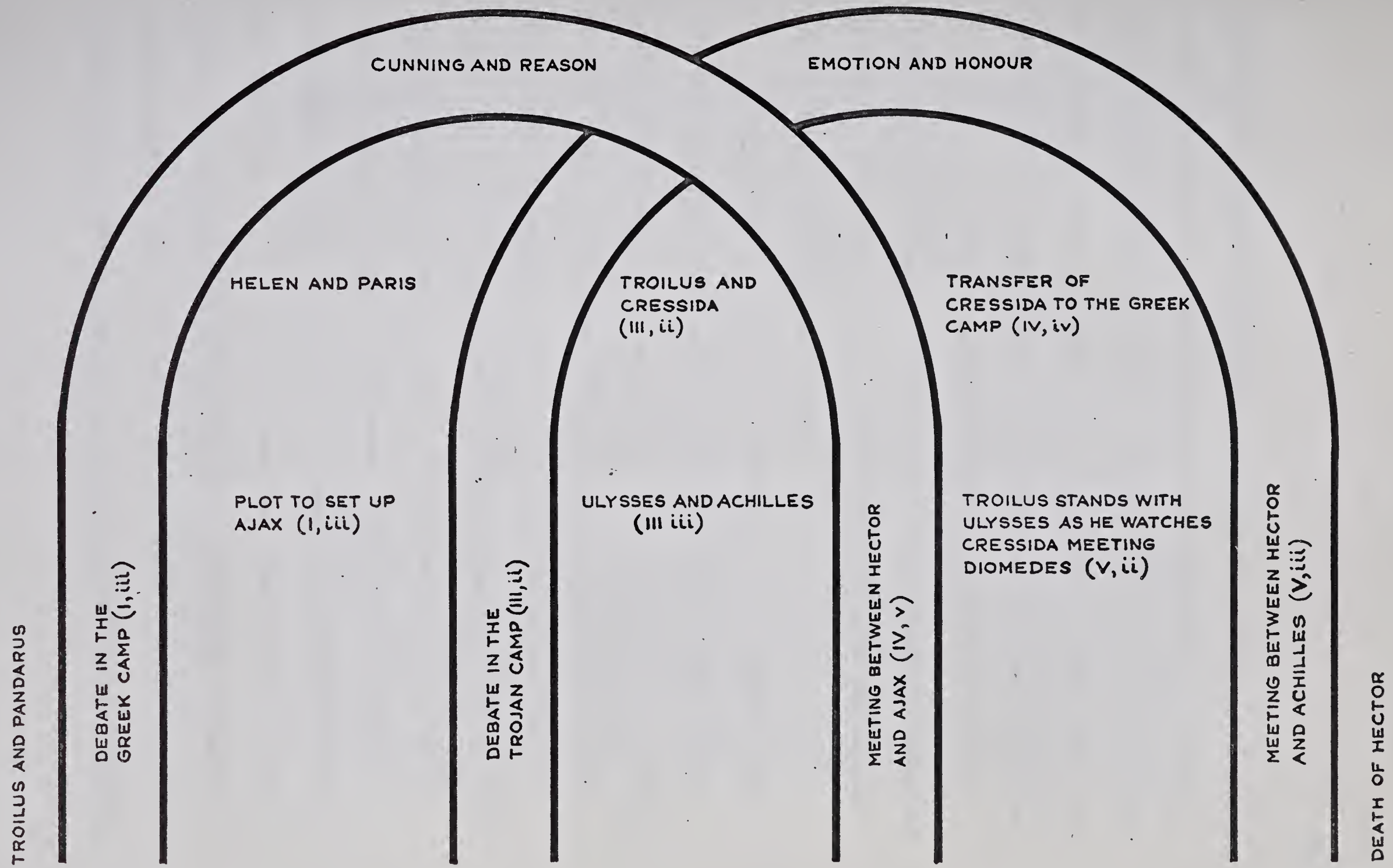
The parallel pictures which marked the structural organization of the initial scenes in the Trojan and Greek camps has been the subject of so much critical discussion that it is unnecessary to treat it in detail here. Both camps were introduced by a scene featuring an inconclusive debate on the war, interrupted by a dramatic and spectacular entrance and concluded with an about-face in policy on the part of the principal figure in the scene. This structural parallelism which Shakespeare sets up is one method he uses to highlight his thematic contrasts. The juxtaposing of metatheatre and animated tapestry-like tableau groups is another method. As a device of contrast

this latter is very powerful.

But it is not in the Trojan camp alone that we find the indirect influence of tapestry configurations. The structure of the whole play suggests an unconscious awareness of the tapestry method of treating the subject. The Trojan War tapestries illustrated in this chapter demonstrate how the tapissier used vertical columns and arches to set off separate events of the story and at the same time to give an impression of thematic unity. In Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare employs the literary counterpart of this principle. He sets up two camps--one with the action centered in cunning and reason; the other, in emotion and honour. The complete plot development grows out of the interaction of these controlling motives. If we tried to represent the structure of this plot by a tapestry-like design, we could use two parallel arches set so that the pillar of one was visible through the archway of the other, and yet near enough together to give the feeling of an interchangeable relationship. In such a design the two pillars on the left would represent the two councils of war; the two on the right would represent the meetings between Hector and Ajax and between Hector and Achilles respectively. Key scenes could then be grouped around these pillars and their respective arches, in such a way as to suggest that neither camp was able to live up to the ideology which it represented. In the position between

The Golden Tree

Detail from the Ulysses and Diomedes
at the Court of King Priam tapestry


TROILUS AND PANDARUS
DEBATE IN THE GREEK CAMP (I, iii)
CUNNING AND REASON
HELEN AND PARIS
PLOT TO SET UP AJAX (I, iii)
DEBATE IN THE TROJAN CAMP (III, ii)
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA (III, ii)
ULYSSES AND ACHILLES (III iii)
MEETING BETWEEN HECTOR AND AJAX (IV, v)
EMOTION AND HONOUR
TRANSFER OF CRESSIDA TO THE GREEK CAMP (IV, iv)
TROILUS STANDS WITH ULYSSES AS HE WATCHES CRESSIDA MEETING DIOMEDES (V, ii)
MEETING BETWEEN HECTOR AND ACHILLES (V, iii)
DEATH OF HECTOR

the first two pillars I would place a small inset of Helen and Paris, representing the cause of the war and showing the subject of debate in the Trojan Council (Act II, ii). Directly below this I would place the setting-up of the Ajax plot (Act I, iii). Here we have a close link with the subject of the debate in the Greek council and a representation of the Machiavellian cunning which Shakespeare sees as a flaw in the ideology of reason. These two sketches reveal by implication the way in which Shakespeare is going to bring emotion and honour into conflict with cunning and reason.

For the centre position I would choose two scenes from Act III, chosen to show the controlling motives at work. The Troilus and Cressida scene would be a symbol of the idealism which belongs to the chivalry concept; the Achilles-Ulysses scene would reveal Machiavelian cunning at work. For the position between the two pillars on the right I would choose the two scenes which explore the disillusionment of Troilus, and which juxtapose the flaws, both in the old ideology of emotion and honour, and in the new ideology of cunning and reason. This, I think, is what is represented in Act IV, iv which gives us the transfer of Cressida to the Greek camp, and in Act V, ii which shows Troilus standing with Ulysses and watching the meeting between Cressida and Diomedes. Finally, to provide a sort of beginning and end to my tapestry reading of this play

Portrait of King Priam

Detail from the Arming of Hector tapestry.
Identification of character clearly marked.

I would have a small inset showing Pandarus and Troilus at the extreme left; and at the extreme right, to balance this, the death of Hector would reveal two features, Hector's failure to live up to his ideology and Ulysses' atrocious treatment of Hector when he allowed the emotion of hatred to overcome the bounds of reason.

Shakespeare lived in an age which saw the roles of the medieval world being replaced by a new technology. Tapestry belonged to the old world and to the old technology. As a craft, it had reached its height in the fifteenth century. By Shakespeare's day, although it still occupied a prominent place in the social and architectural scheme of things, its importance had begun to wane. In Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare was concerned with the changing patterns which he saw in the world. The standards of the "old" hung like dark shadows on the horizon of civilization; the impact of the "new" had been felt, but the ways of understanding were not yet strong enough to break through. Just as the arras in Hamlet working on Shakespeare's subconscious mind produced a series of patterns where intrigue and cunning were hidden behind the arras of the mind, so in Troilus and Cressida the subconscious mind was reacting to a type of configuration which was part of a familiar tapestry pattern. Shakespeare took, perhaps unconsciously, the principles of configuration which were characteristic of many of the medieval tapestries--a series of columns, spires, and

arches integrated into a set and used to provide a subdividing contrast for a series of co-ordinated scenes--and he reproduced that principal in the literary equivalent which marked the structure of his drama.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1] Odyssey, II, 39. Translation by E. V. Rieu.

[2] Müntz, A Short History of Tapestry, 18.

[3] Hunter, A Practical Book of Tapestries, 224.

[4] Ibid., 229.

[5] Ibid., 237.

[6] Thomson, A History of Tapestry, 176.

Chapter II

[1] McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy, 7.

[2] Chapman's Homer, Iliad III, 134-136.

[3] Ackerman, Tapestry, The Mirror of Civilization, 2.

[4] Exodus, XXXVI, viii.

[5] Esther V, vi.

[6] Müntz, 21.

[7] Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, 361-364.

[8] --------. The Book of the Duchess, 332-334.

[9] Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, 66-68.

[10] Norris, Costume and Fashion, Vol. III, 473.

[11] Burton, The Elizabethans at Home, 98; quoting from Hentzner, Travels in England, 1598.

[12]Nichols, Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, H, 47.

[13]Müntz, 239.

[14]Campbell, Tragic Heroes, 6.

[15]All passages from Shakespeare's plays, unless otherwise indicated, are quoted from the Kökeritz facsimile of the first folio. Line numbers were determined by using the number indicated at the lower right-hand of the page and counting back.

[16]Golding, Metamorphoses VI, 64-166.

[17]Bazin, Loom of Art, 131.

[18]Ovid, 101-102.

[19]Golding, 124-125.

[20]Spenser, Faerie Queene III, xi, 244-252.

Chapter III

[1]Crutwell, The Shakespearean Moment, 31.

[2]Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 152.

[3]Bartlett, A New Complete Concordance.

[4]Hunter, 234.

[5]Ibid., 276.

[6]Ibid., 277.

[7]This idea is elaborated by Derick Traversi in An Approach to Shakespeare, 235-261.

[8]Phillips, "The Museum's Collection of Renaissance Tapestries," 125.

Chapter IV

[1]Harrison, How They Lived, 49; quoting from William Harrison, A Description Of England, 1587.

[2]Burton, The Elizabethans at Home, 98; quoting from a diary kept by Rathgeb for his master, the Duke of Wurttemberg.

[3]Vaughan, Hamlet, a Bantam Classic, Notes, 290.

[4]Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism, 273.

[5]Thomson, 275.

[6]Müntz, 221.

[7]Black, The Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 494; quoting from Harrington, Nugae Antiquae.

[8]Shakespeare, Cambridge edition, 920.

[9]Draper, The Hamlet of Shakespeare's Audience, 229.

Chapter V

[1]Huizinga, Waning of the Middle Ages, 9.

[2]Forsythe, "The Trojan War in Mediæval Tapestries," 76.

[3]Huizinga, 60.

[4]Hunter, 87.

[5]Forsythe, 79.

[6]Hunter, 73.

[7]McLuhan, Gutenberg Galaxy, 118.

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